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The WAYS of LIFE

By Stephen Ward

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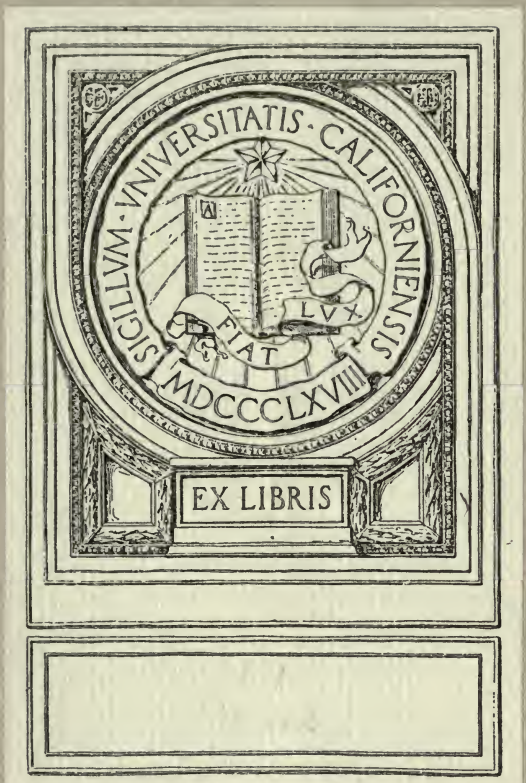
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THE
WAYS OF LIFE

A Study in Ethics

By

STEPHEN WARD

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PREFACE

It might be doubted whether the whole range of ethical speculation could be covered in a short book, or whether, if it were done, it was done adequately. But the doubt, to my mind, is irrelevant. Ethics resemble science in that what is most promising is also most debatable. Old knowledge is nothing but the point of vantage from which we win new. Except for this purpose it is even, in a sense, unprofitable. So the aim of ethics should be, not to say all that has been said, but to establish new ethical relations, and, by means of these, yet others, according to the increasing subtlety and capacity of human kind. And this cannot be done by one man, or one book, however comprehensive.

Comprehensiveness is, in fact, a drawback. I might have developed my opinions at greater length, were it not for the fear that the more they served me the less would they be likely to serve another. The value of thoughts is their value in exchange, and were the impress too individual they might lose this precious quality.

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We should like to be oracles. We should like to be immortal. But has nature so provided? The thoughts of a man which are true pass into current speech, and his name is forgotten. If we are remembered, it is mainly in order to point out our mistakes.

I write, therefore, not in the hope of prescribing the limits within which the future must walk. I have no wish to capture To-morrow and clip its wings. The question, as I see it, is not what I make of posterity, but what posterity will make of me. One way or another, it will live on our bones, and we can contrive no more than that it should extract such nourishment as they contain with the greatest possible ease. We can hand over, not our life, but our vitality: not a book, but the curiosity which made it. Even in our own time the voice of Authority rings in an empty room: it is vain to expect that the future will give it greater attention.

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BOOK I. MANNERS

SECTION 1.

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN SOCIETY

MAN is a co-operative creature. This is to take him as we find him. Fanciful reconstructions of some period of early time, in order to form conclusions as to his 'natural' state, are not very helpful. The life of natural or primitive man may have been 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short', or it may have been a golden age of constitutional felicity. It is more likely, if human nature then was much what it is now, that it was a compound of a desire to profit by some one else's work without a corresponding return and an unwilling recognition of the fact that such courses ultimately led to disaster. Man cannot ignore his fellow men. Like all animals he has an instinctive interest in the others of the same species. When dog meets dog there follows an interesting sniffing passage by which both parties ascertain whether the friendly or the hostile element is to prevail. The manœuvre signifies some hidden bond; a dog shows no interest of this kind in cow or cat, with which, except under the influence of domestication, no friendly intercourse takes place. The same thing is to be seen in one child when it meets another; the same possibility of close association is implied in their approaches. That is, the bond between man and man is illustrated long before there is any power to realize it intellectually.

Present society, indeed, is far from any natural intercourse whether desirable or otherwise. They are the fetters of history which unite man with man; the articles of association are artificial. Elements in the present situation are due to measures taken centuries ago, in some cases, when it is obvious that the needs of the present, or even the possibility of its existing at all, were not taken into consideration. While we criticize the past in the light of present knowledge, it is not fair to blame it for not possessing the knowledge we have, and which we have in large part acquired as a result of their mistakes. The bankruptcy, for example, of the theory that a society based upon privilege could be permanently prosperous is due in the main to the fact that our forefathers tried to establish such a society, which the course of years has shown to be unworkable. As a theory it has its attractions. Plato and Aristotle, to mention no others, based their hopes of human salvation upon it. Time alone has demonstrated that in practice it makes too great a demand upon the self-restraint of the average man, and offers too many temptations. Much, then, in modern institutions is merely the wreck of past experiment, and there is no need to lash our indignation too severely against such errors; still less to hold that they sprang of a deliberate intention to oppress the many in the interest of a few.

But the mere correction of past error is not enough to establish the human community on right lines. If we do not wish merely to reap another crop of mistakes we must have such knowledge of human propensities as it is possible to obtain. Social organization must have some regard for human nature, both what it is and what it may become, and an understanding of human nature

is not innate, is, in fact, only to be had by the patient and impartial methods of the other sciences. That feeling on the subject should run high is the reverse of helpful.

The co-operative character of man has a consequence which is inevitable throughout all the complications of history. This is that each person in the community has a function more or less special to himself. The function is not one to which, as in the community of bees, you are born. There it seems to be provided that, according to the food with which you are fed, you will turn out the mother of the tribe, a sterile worker with no ambitions beyond, or a do-nothing drone whose life though short may be presumed to be happy. In the case of man training has to take the place of food. How the bees learn their work heaven alone knows. Man learns his with much labour and many mistakes; but the advantage, as it seems to us, is that, while the bees still perform the work of which Virgil sang, the history of man is ever changing. Suppose a Roman bee to have survived to this day, there is little doubt that, introduced with proper precautions into a modern hive, she could start upon her immemorial labours without delay. A Roman senator in similar case would take no small time to learn the customs of the country.

There is an infinity of crafts and an infinity of craftsmen, the results of whose activities make up the human cosmos. In consequence, no one person reflects more than a very small part of the world in which he lives. The sailmaker may have never been to sea, the statesman have never seen a slum. Each man's circle of interest is small, and, as things are, it may well be that the particular work which he contributes to the community is that which interests him the least. Apart

from his work he has what he calls his 'life', a bundle of personal interests, most of them trivial to outward seeming, yet such as he would resign very unwillingly. What is important to other people is his work. It is a commonplace that the individual can produce a great deal more of any one commodity than he has any need for. The sailmaker on a desert island would bury himself under a heap of his discarded output and die a poor man; living among his fellows he can dispose of all he makes, and can, or should, die rich. He exchanges his work against that of others; and thus it is that he, with the rest, has leisure for his idiosyncrasies. Of course the variety of exchange itself lends colour to his life; the greater the number of commodities, the fuller is, or should be, his existence.

Co-operation means that each man contributes his share and takes whatever is going. As he can eat, drink, wear, and destroy only a certain amount in the course of a short life, it is plain that a state in which he is sufficiently provided with necessaries is soon reached—very soon, when it is considered that the word necessaries is of elastic meaning. In this matter there is a strange contrast among the human races. Some are content with the barest minimum and continue in the same course of life for countless thousands of years. Others no sooner satisfy one want than it leads the way to another. Of this kind are the European nations, at least of recent centuries. Yet even this cannot be said without qualification. We are not wholly enamoured of progress, nor is the savage wholly indifferent to it, if he is shown the way. A large number of us resent innovation, and invest present conditions with a kind of sanctity which to alter seems impious.

This is the influence of habit. Life tends to settle down in a groove in which one is content that what happened yesterday should happen again to-day. But whether you want to go on or to stay still, in both cases you have wants. A stationary and a progressive society alike have wants; it is in the nature of their wants that they differ. Both show a tendency to conservatism; so that while it has never entered the heads of the Australian Aruntas to keep themselves warm at nights with the skins of the animals they catch, it is almost within living memory that the construction of railways met the fiercest opposition, and there are those who still make a pride of not using a motor.

The difference, therefore, between savagery and civilization is not in the nature or intensity, but in the variety, of wants. And the variety of wants depends upon the amount of knowledge which is brought to bear for the purpose of elucidating and supplying them. In this connexion it is to be remembered that the European's conviction of his superiority to any other is a very recent growth. Marco Polo wrote of the great Khan of Cathay and his empire as in all respects comparable to anything in Europe; nor was the Turk of the fifteenth century regarded by us as inferior in civilization. The change of attitude has come about through the development of science, which is the product of Western Europe alone, however much it may owe for its start to other races or times. It has reversed the relations of man and nature: before, the question was how could nature be prevented from subduing man; it now is to what lengths can man go in subduing nature. The consciousness of power is changing the face of society, and man is disposed to doubt the necessity of hardships he formerly regarded

as inevitable. Mechanical improvements in the crafts have not only suggested a radical alteration in the social structure but have shown the means by which it might be effected. The old force in the appeal of conservatism that, though it might not be the best course, it was at least the safest, is gone. Science holds us in its grip, and as we cannot go back we are compelled to go forward.

Science, of course, is only another word for knowledge; it is not a word of which we need be in the least frightened, and we shall have occasion later to examine its claims and its possibilities. But before that something else is necessary, an analysis of this capacity in man for wanting something, which seems to be the mainspring of his existence. If he ceases to want, he will disappear. In fact, there is no other way of accounting for the decay of forceful peoples like the Romans and Greeks. Life, one may presume, ceased to amuse, whether because they had reached what appeared to be the limits of human knowledge, or for whatever reason. They lost their wants and their hopes; their populations declined, and they were swamped by ruder races which in their prime they had despised.

SECTION 2. ANALYSIS OF DESIRE

A BABY cries. We know that it cries for food. Can the baby be said to know that it is food it wants? Unless one would extend the normal meaning of knowledge the answer seems to be No. The cry is an expression of vague discomfort. Its real want may be food, or warmth, or something else; it does not know, and we have to

guess. This is the hazard of nursing; for, not needing food, it may well absorb another bottle to its ultimate distress, or, needing food very badly, it may refuse to take it.

The cry is a vague way of expressing a want, and it is the expression of a vague want. The wants grow more precise according as the power of expressing them grows. The baby is not a creature of few wants and simple. It is plain to the eye of any one who has handled them that from the hour of its birth one baby is as different from another as two eight-pound bipeds are able to be. Temperamental crises, bad enough in adults, are the baby's special bane; in its rages are involved all the potential elements of its character. In the last resort, fortunately, the primal necessities of food and sleep reduce its being to some sort of order; but within these limits it is quite capable of refusing what it demonstrably wants, or crying for no apparent reason.

Its wants, then, are neither few nor many, but vague. As it grows we begin by telling it what it wants, and it ends by believing us. We make our classification by what we have observed of the normal desires and tendencies in human nature. The child is painfully at the mercy of its pastors and masters both for what it learns and for the values it attaches to the several parts of its character. An inquiring mind may be called curiosity, shyness secretiveness; it may be taught to despise its most fruitful qualities. We grown-ups pass on our mistakes as well as our experience, and this is the abiding thorn of education; if the child could only learn to be what he is without it, how much nicer he would be. But he cannot; he must discover his parents' mistakes when making his own, and if he has not been pricked too

roughly the damage is reparable. Without question, however, harm is often done. False values and false analysis are responsible for the most awful monstrosities. Thus it is that a prig and a boor can call himself a puritan, or a little wanton trifler an artist.

We give names to wants of necessity, but we should be careful not to attach too much importance to them; for ultimately a man's wants can only be identified with his character, and character, as we all know, eludes classification. Viewed from without, a bundle of desires and motives called character can be given a rough label according to its bearing upon social needs and standards; viewed from within, it is so subtle, imperious, necessary, that to classify it seems almost an insult. A knave can justify to his own conscience conduct for which the world shuts him up.

Character in a community such as ours is not a purely natural development. Misunderstanding is one thing, but there are external needs also to which it must conform. So far as man is bound to find food and warmth and to deliver himself from enemies its finer shades must remain undeveloped. Similarly, certain extravagances, like ambition—understanding by this a desire to have more glory than one's fellows—require pruning by reason of their bad effect on the community. These limitations apart, the greater its variety the fuller and more intense a man's life is, not only to himself but to his neighbours. If one blot is more apparent than another in present-day existence, it is the unnecessary conventionalization of character by prejudice and ignorance. The world should be less matter-of-fact in assigning vocations, and less brutal with those who hesitate. For the want of a little understanding a man may be off his true bent all his

life, and, without knowing why, will have the air of one who has been disappointed. The people who really know what they want to do and are in a position to do it are few and lucky. When a girl becomes melancholy and full of whims her mother is probably wrong in deciding that what she wants is a husband; but only a Florence Nightingale is strong enough to resist the conventional remedy vigorously enough to discover her own destiny.

But the society does not merely exert a mechanical pressure on personal character. The society itself has something which might be called character. The French boy becomes a Frenchman, not a Spaniard: a Yorkshireman is very different from a man of Sussex. A body of men living and working together through an extreme period of time develops subtle and intimate peculiarities, so that a nation has the appearance and growth of a vital organism. What happens is that the character of the individuals reacts on the character of the race, and this in turn influences the individual. The child unconsciously learns a certain way of looking at things, and even though he spends his life in upsetting all he has learnt, his thought bears the impress of the moulds in which it has been formed. He learns a language, a code of manners, the current valuations of the stock-in-trade of life. His first step to knowledge is to learn what others know; so that by the time he endeavours to take an independent view of his own personality this has already received a very definite shape. He is not a free-lance; for good or ill he must take his place in the community.

The conclusion of this is that of all the variety of activity which makes up a man's life there is very little which he could say he does out of the call of his personality. He finds himself a bundle of wants, which he

tries to realize ; but arising as they do from such manifold influences, they are not necessarily consistent or compatible one with another. In fact, for this reason desires are commonly regarded as contradictory things which can only be brought to order by suppression and training. The view is unquestionably wrong, but it springs from a failure to distinguish between a man's personality and the variety of influences at work upon it. Living in a community a man need only copy his neighbours, and his life will acquire some semblance of character and purpose. A quality here, a quality there will seem admirable, and he will imitate them, regardless whether they are consistent. He may aspire to be, all at once, an athlete and a gay dog, chivalrous and yet imperious, trustworthy yet artful, rugged yet fashionable. He emulates these qualities, but has not the knowledge to see that they cannot all be worn at once.

In spite of difficulties, character remains the most consistent thing about us. Other things being equal it is character which predominates in desires, and a man's desires can in the main be regarded as so many aspects of his personality. The names and classifications which we ascribe to them are convenient and useful, but it is not to be supposed that there exist, separately and independently, entities corresponding to those terms. On the contrary, it is to be supposed that a man's individuality starts with his first moment and remains peculiar to him, even though it has aspects common to other men. That these aspects should be numerous the essential sameness of the conditions of human existence ensures. But though a man does the same things as other people it does not follow that he does them in the same way ; though he has the same wants he does not have them in the same

proportion. And what he wants most and most intimately is precisely that which it is most difficult to specify.

The best name, therefore, to give to that which moves him and makes him is desire—in the singular, because under all its manifestations it is one.

A man desires to do or to be that which he desires. What exactly is gained by realizing a desire, or how it is done, are questions we do not, in practice, stop to answer; but in an inquiry of the present kind they naturally form the next stage.

SECTION 3. ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITY

THERE could be no activity without a body. This to a certain extent is obvious, though some forms of activity, pure mathematics for example, might be thought to be hampered rather than helped by the body—and this may well be the case. Disembodied reason, however, is something beyond our experience. Most of us regard action as the aim of existence; and if asked what we mean by action we should say that it means putting our body in or through such postures that the end desired is achieved, and what was fancy becomes fact.

Yet the questions why should mere alterations of posture make all this difference? how is it that our bodies respond to our direction? and what is the nature of this direction? present a good many puzzles.

The normal answer to the question what exactly is meant by realizing a desire, would be, presumably, somewhat to the effect that a desire is in itself incomplete. It is an idea in a man's head: when it is realized it

becomes part of the real world. The answer, that is, would distinguish between a real world and a world of thoughts and fancies. This is a common distinction, and no one except for the sake of paradox would deny that it was, in some sense, valid; yet no explanation is without its difficulties.

The real world, one might say, is that which I apprehend with my senses and which is the object of my thoughts. The senses are sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell. By the eye one learns the colour, shape, and spatial relations of things; by touch their feel and weight, and by the other three other peculiarities which are not so easy to specify. Each contributes to form the material of the real world; it is about the real world that man thinks, and in it that he acts.

Here arise questions; how does the material of sense become thought, and how does thought have any application to the real world? In what consists the difference between the real world and your thought of it? Sometimes by real world we mean things as our senses apprehend them, as when we talk of the sun rising and setting; sometimes we mean what thought declares to be happening, as that it is the earth which revolves round the sun, not the sun round the earth.

The fact is that the matter is not capable of brief or simple statement. As the subject of this book is not metaphysics, to enter into detail would be out of place. All that is necessary for the present purpose is to show that such terms as thought, sense, real world, desire, and activity are by no means independent of each other; on the contrary, they are interwoven in a definite, but at some points very obscure fashion.

It is first to be noted that any questions which arise

must be answered, if at all, by thought. This is the more evident if one reflects that thought is not merely the means by which questions can be answered; it is the only possible means by which a question can be raised. In fact, thought is asking questions.

A second point is that we only know of the senses, whether in themselves or for what they transmit, by means of thought. There is a possibility of misunderstanding here because of the various shades of knowledge. One can apprehend something without knowing 'all about it'; but any apprehension demands a certain degree of knowledge, if merely to know it is there.

It follows, therefore, that though thought regards the distinction between thought and senses and the objects of the senses as a distinction of fact, it is in the first instance a distinction of thought, whatever else it may be.

The distinction which thought makes between itself and sense is certainly to be regarded as an endeavour to contrast the 'voluntary' nature of the one with the 'involuntary' nature of the other. A man can think of what he likes, and in any order. To think of London and Madrid he has not to go to London and Madrid; but to have the sensations of these places a certain series of sensations, representing their distance from one another, must be traversed. Sensations, in fact, have a spatial and temporal order which however much it varies can never disappear. One sensation can be removed only by another taking its place, and in them there is always an element of the unknown and unforeseeable.

But if sensations have a spatial and temporal order, thought is not free in the sense of arbitrary. When a man thinks he must think what appears to him at

least to be true; it must be consistent according to its subject-matter; it must not contradict itself. The difference between thought and sense is a difference of the principles upon which they develop. While thought is not bound to a definite spatial and temporal order, sense is under no need to conform to the principles of intellectual consistency—in fact, is never consistent according to this standard. A piece of chalk is not chalk for ever and ever; at some time it disintegrates. What takes place between these two widely separate points of time must be regarded as taking place, by inappreciable degrees, at every moment of the time between. A piece of chalk, therefore, is chalk and not-chalk at the same moment; and the same thing can be demonstrated of any other object of sense.

The principle of thought is consistency; the principle of sense is that nothing can change in space or in time *per saltum*; if a thing alters its place in space or changes in time it must do so by a series of intermediate stages which are or can themselves be apprehended. This is the great dividing line between thought and sense: for present purposes it must suffice to add that no rational link between them has yet been discovered.

With these considerations in mind one may attempt a working definition of activity. Activity may in the first place be unaccompanied by thought. Though we may be conscious of our hearts beating or muscles twitching, it cannot be said that such activity is controlled by thought; and in the case of such processes as digestion or the circulation of the blood we are not even conscious of them.

Then there is a kind of activity which begins under the control, or at least under the observation, of thought,

and gradually passes out of it ; for example, the handling of a fishing-rod or any sort of tool. In a highly complicated evolution like boxing such an activity can become a beautiful example of spontaneous yet completely purposive response to external conditions. The good boxer does not need to think out a parry or a blow ; these things come as best fits the occasion.

At the other extreme is the case of a man who directs his whole life according to some end. He has made a calculation of what the world offers and what he can do, and the part, therefore, which thought plays in his scheme of things is very large.

Between these extremes there are all degrees ; so that one may say that activity varies according to the amount of thought there is in it. The difference in the activity is comparatively little. An unambitious man moves about pretty well as much as an ambitious ; there is not very much difference even between the motions of an energetic and a lazy man. Both, for example, may be seated at the same office desk for the same number of hours ; both must get to and from their work, and both must digest their dinner. In any case, the difference in output does not lie in the greater variety of the motions of the one as against the other, but in there being more of the same in the same space of time.

The effect of thought apart, activity is strictly limited by the actual constitution of the body and the senses. We can react only upon what the senses apprehend, and only by such movements as the body allows.

What is more, the senses are directly proportional to the reactive capacities of the body. If a body is to move without self-destruction, it must have senses. Touch, sight, and hearing have a direct relation to the

fact that the body can move; taste and smell, similarly, refer to the necessity for the organism to take food, to find its meals, or to avoid its enemies. Natural history shows that the sense endowment varies according to the needs and capacities of the creature; dogs have a strong sense of smell while we have practically lost ours; birds seem to know by taste only whether a thing is poisonous or not. So that it is not surprising to observe that organisms, like plants, which do not need senses, do not have them.

If we ask why we have senses we must answer, because our bodies move: if we ask why our bodies move we must answer, because we have senses. No more ultimate answer is possible[1]; we are confined to the limits of this circle. It follows that we cannot treat our senses and our activity as two separate things. They are part of the same function.

Within this function must also be included desire. Reaction implies the desire to react; the possession of senses implies that you will desire to react upon the information they furnish. You cannot desire not to act, except in the relative form in which not acting is simply an extreme case of activity—activity in suspension, as it were. Refusing to act is merely action in a negative form.

Regarding, then, desire and activity as of the essence of man's nature, an essence which cannot be explained but only described, it remains to consider more fully the manner and extent of thought's part in influencing activity and desire.

[1] In the present state of knowledge, of course.

SECTION 4.

THE FUNCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

THE relation between sensation and activity is purposive. The body responds to the senses in such a way as to fulfil one of the possibilities suggested. If the creature sees an enemy it either runs away or attacks him. It smells food, and eats it or not, as the case may be. The better the equipment of senses the more the alternatives presented. In our own case the possibilities are so infinitely various that they do not seem like possibilities at all; the real world comes rather to look like a field in which we can wander at our own sweet will.

An obvious function of thought is to increase this purposiveness. Still using the same senses and capable only of the same limited number of reactions, we can so enlarge their scope that we seem almost to be entering on new paths: but the paths are new only in the sense of being developments of the old. By means of thought we invent tools, and by means of thought and tools we build machines, so that we can see our enemy at four or five times the normal distance, and run away from him not on our legs but in a motor-car. By thought an aimless twiddling of the fingers is converted into the making of a book. Though our bodily movements are as limited as ever they can be made to mean and do ever so much more.

Thought, then, enters into the sensation-activity circuit and enlarges it. It makes the senses give more efficient information, and enables the body to respond more variously. But to ask how it does this is to strike a metaphysical problem upon which the last word has

by no means been said. For this reason general observations only must suffice for present purposes.

The product of thought is knowledge, and it is by knowledge that we affect the above-mentioned changes. Knowledge is by its nature open to all thinking persons; it is a means of pooling the output of human brains. In other words, it is general; and if asked to define it the ordinary man would seize on this characteristic for a start. He would say that what he saw was particular, what he knew about it was general. He would, however, most probably put the dividing line between particular and general in the wrong place. *This tree*, he would think, is particular, while *tree* was general. It only needs to be pointed out that terms denoting particularity are themselves general terms: relatively to *tree*, *this tree* has a sort of particularity, but in itself it is a general term: it can be applied to any *this tree*.

All terms are terms of thought: if thought is general, all terms are general. However particular to myself I may believe certain experiences to be, so far as I think about them I must do so in general terms. It follows that the real particular is inexpressible—a queer but unavoidable state of affairs.

It follows that the real world is a general term, a construction of thought. It is an invincible notion that the real world is a sort of place we are stuck down in, and that by being stuck down in it we come to know about it; that there is a difference between what we know about it and what it really is. Its being and our knowledge of it are regarded as two distinct things. The truth is that these things are not distinct but one and the same. The world's reality is what we know of it and nothing else.

To say that the real world is the world of thought sounds rather paradoxical, rather like putting it inside a man's head instead of outside. But the paradox hinges on a constant confusion of the word real. Sometimes the word is used to denote that inexpressible particularity which is implied by living, that something unique and unsharable which consists in the fact that my life is mine and not yours. But this is just what cannot be reduced to the forms of knowledge, inasmuch as what is known must be a general term. This kind of real is a negative term; it is just what you do not and cannot know. Reality in the workable sense is the world of knowledge. The world I know of is the world you know of, and if I say *The tree is there* I imply by that that my knowledge can be your knowledge. Just because knowledge is common it must eliminate the element of particularity.

Knowledge is perfectly conscious that in its processes there is something lacking. In it there is always this distinction between a thing and what you know about it, which was mentioned above. But the inexorable fact is that though the thing may be more than what you know about it, what else it is is just that which cannot be known, and if it were known would not be the thing.

The point may be further illustrated by a consideration of the Cartesian fundamental *I think, therefore I am.* The phrase admirably denotes the truth that anything in being must be reduced to terms of thought before it can be known. We can only get to being through thought, but this is not the same as saying that thought is being; it is merely the best we can do. To use a metaphor, the relation between being and knowledge is indirect, for being has to be reflected by knowledge before it is known

as being, and in the reflection it has lost something. It follows that so far as you are real—in the ultimate sense—you do not know it, and so far as you know it you are not real. We must therefore content ourselves with reality in the sense in which it is conterminous with knowledge.

Another aspect of the same problem is illustrated in the relation between thought and sense. Sense, of course, is a term of thought and therefore a general term. Ordinarily we mean by sense something which is more particular than thought; a sensation of *this tree* is more particular than the general term *tree*. But we cannot express what sense is apart from thought, for any success in this direction merely makes a thought of it. Ultimately, therefore, we have to confess that the sense-element in thought is necessarily unknowable, that in fact sense is not-knowledge and knowledge is not-sense. We are reduced to the negative.

The use of the negative is the peculiarity of thought. For sense there can be no non-existence. What is, is complete.[1] But knowledge being incomplete is perfectly familiar with negative judgements.

For present purposes, therefore, the real world is the world as known by thought. It is a general term fabricated of general terms. So it is that the present moment is hitched up with the world of knowledge. The present sensation may be 'that of a room'; but analysed and classified in this way it is merely part of the scheme of knowledge, and there is accordingly no difficulty in relating it with the other parts of the scheme of knowledge. Though the door is closed, outside we *know* the hall to stand, and outside the hall again the street, the town, the country, the universe, its past history and its

[1] Cf. note on p. 66.

future possibilities. If we think we have succeeded in describing the present we are mistaken; we have succeeded only in adding to knowledge.

It is because the real world is only the world of knowledge that we are able to share it, although what each individual knows varies so much. The difference between two men's knowledge is not that one is more true but that it is more precise. Both alike may have knowledge of water, though one only of its chemical constituents. A child shares the same world as its parent, and this is because the vaguest knowledge is of the same quality as the precisest and differs only in complication.

The endeavour of thought to turn everything into knowledge is not undertaken without difficulties. For thought is a bodily process, expressed in and by a body; and knowledge, though common to all, and the property of none, can only be acquired and maintained by the bodily activity of the individual. This irrelevant but necessary activity is what we know as mental imagery.

Any man's thought is accompanied by a flow of this imagery, which is never absent, though it varies with individuals. This is apparent if one takes a term of thought so general that it is impossible to say that anything 'corresponding' to it exists in fact—the thought of *mammal,* for example. Of course, nothing 'corresponding to' the conception *tree* exists either, or to the conception *this tree*, for the reasons above stated; but the argument is less likely to be confused by taking a more obvious example. The term mammal is made by classifying a set of organisms by a peculiarity which they possess in common; and it would have been supposed that when thinking of it there would have been no necessity to form any mental image. As the human mind is constituted,

however, it is impossible to think of it without. Some people, indeed, with strong visual imagery, go so far as to picture to themselves some sort of beast which stands to them as a symbol for mammal. All of us must associate it with an auditory image, the sound, that is, of the word, or its feeling when you speak it. Every thought we have is accompanied by a mental symbol ; any one who catches himself in the middle of a train of thought will find his mind a riot of confused and in some cases almost absurd imagery.

The truth is that all this is merely suppressed sense and muscle activity. Moreover, the activity is not completely suppressed. If you try to visualize a thing you will roll your eyeballs. If you try to think of one tune while somebody is whistling another you will not succeed ; the mind's ear, that is, is trying to make use of organs which are otherwise occupied. Many old persons talk aloud what they are thinking.

Attention was drawn in the last section to the fact that activity and the senses could not be treated as things apart, that the senses have obvious reference to the way in which the body can respond. Here is another proof: for it seems to be indifferent to the mind when thinking whether the accompanying imagery is derived from the senses or the muscles, or both. Some people can really see or hear things in their head ; most of us in the main 'talk to ourselves', that is, we get our imagery by innervating the speech-muscles. But though the ingredients may vary, the whole body and all the senses are in play or are capable of being. If we imagine ourselves fighting we not only picture our adversary but our heart beats faster, and we find our muscles tense as if we actually engaged. Story-telling takes advantage of this human idiosyncrasy.

The remarkable thing is that though we are accustomed

to thought controlling the body, we commonly regard the senses as able only to be stimulated by something outside. But in this instance thought itself is capable of stimulating the senses. Hence the possibility of hallucinations.

We find, then, that though thinking claims to be an activity entirely different from muscle and sense activity, it cannot take place unless accompanied by muscle and sense activity of a seemingly irrelevant kind.

For our purposes we may sum up thought as a function which by generalizing diversifies the scope of the activity hitherto restricted by the natural limits of the senses and the body. It creates a system of knowledge upon which everybody can draw to suit his own case. This system, though it is never complete, is at all stages of its growth useful. That is, though it is more useful to know water as H_2O, to know it merely as water has its advantages. Knowledge is to be measured rather by its different grades of usefulness than by its different grades of truth: the simpler grades are not less true; as they are contained in later developments so are later developments contained in them.

Furthermore, knowledge is thought, but not all thought is knowledge. It is attempting to be knowledge, it is knowledge in the making, but the experiment is not always successful. If a man sets himself to any problem his thought will make many false casts; not all he thinks will be able to pass muster as knowledge. In ordinary speech, his thought will be 'wrong'. He will commit 'errors'. Inasmuch as on the present theory no thought is wrong and the grades of thought are distinguished not by their relative truth but by their relative precision, it becomes necessary to ask in what error consists.

The man who thinks the sun rises and sets may appear

to have wrong notions in comparison with one who is acquainted with the present state of astronomical knowledge; but present astronomical knowledge may look very queer in five hundred years' time. The truth is that so long as any particular piece of knowledge does not conflict with the whole body of knowledge as known at the time, it is good enough. The clerics who made Galileo recant were not animated by a violent spite against science as such: they merely conceived that such theories as his were not consonant with what was generally known and believed, and were therefore dangerous. In the light of then existing knowledge the Ptolemaic theory was reasonable enough; the difficulty arose from the fact that folk held then—as most indeed do now—that truth was a state of finality which could be reached once and for all. That this is not so is evident even in sciences so purely 'intellectual' as mathematics; these are capable of indefinite development, yet each new step does not invalidate all that has gone before. Nowadays many sciences have reached a stage at which earlier theories are no longer displaced but developed. But there is in all of them a stage so crude that it bears hardly any resemblance to what we understand by a theory.

Truth, then, is relative to the capacities of the knower; a scientist of to-day has more truth than one of yesterday, but the one is not all right and the other all wrong; in order to differ they must have something in common. As regards such persons and such matters, to speak of error is misleading.

But there are cases in which error definitely occurs. A man finds that he has added wrongly, that he has given away half a sovereign in place of a sixpence, that he has written Josephs instead of Jones. Here is no question

of relative grades of truth; these are errors pure and simple.

Errors such as these must be attributed to the mental imagery which is the necessary but irrelevant accompaniment of thought. All thought expresses itself, or tries to express itself, in language; where words fail other sorts of mental imagery supplement them. As already pointed out, these things are suppressed muscle and sense activities, and such activities tend to become habitual. We do our buttons up in the same way every morning, and we expect to see the furniture in its usual place. Further, all muscular activity has a way of functioning just a little inappositely. On some days we play tennis and are unable to hit a ball. Why this should be it is hard to say; but it is evident that our thought suffers from this fact. We forget dates or remember them wrong, we miscalculate, we perform the motions of giving sixpence to the cabman 'without thinking', as we say; and the phrase pretty well expresses the fact. For a great deal of our thought is carried on automatically by mental imagery. It is simply memory.

This accounts for the great difficulty of thinking out something new, which is the more odd inasmuch as a new truth once stated seems to be obvious. The difficulty lies in forcing ourselves out of the customary ways of thinking; it is hard to see a problem apart from the phrases in which it is clothed, and as the problem is in part to create new phrases the old ones are necessarily misleading. It is clear that if knowledge were the aim of man the difficulty would be less; but in human history knowledge has been called in only to solve pressing difficulties, and then only so far as might suit the needs of the moment.

To sum up: sense is the term by which thought attempts to express the inexpressible. So far as I describe what I apprehend I make it general, and it loses its special relevance for me. Further, I distinguish between my senses and my bodily activity, but the distinction is only relative. I have no apprehension of my bodily activity except through a change in my sensations.

Further, I recognize thought as that by whose means alone I, not do, but know that I am doing, not be, but know that I am being. By its means only can I explain myself to myself. Knowledge admits its subordinate position. It attempts to describe something other than itself. It makes itself a predicate to a subject. It is knowledge *of* something, not the something itself. At the same time it says clearly enough that man will not get anything but knowledge and that he had better take what he can get.

With these factors in hand, the next stage is to examine their interplay, and judge in what manner they make up human existence.[1]

[1] Some may ask, why suppose that knowledge is general in the sense of being common to several thinkers? Why assume more thinkers than one, whose mind exhibits the various manifestations here described?

The answer is that there is no logical necessity for the course suggested. It is like multiplying both sides of an algebraic equation by x; it leaves matters just where they were before. The one thinker will still proceed as though there were other thinkers.

Thought clearly assumes the existence of more thinkers than one; and, to be loyal to the argument here presented, what thought says is true. In this case the truth is obviously not in its clearest form, but that is not a reason for treating it as though it did not exist.

SECTION 5.

PLEASURE AND THE THEORY OF GAMES

FIRST to take up those points which bear on the present argument—it has been said that desire is not a general name for a bundle of particular desires; that the latter are merely aspects of the larger desire which is in effect the root or mainspring of man's nature. He desires food not for the sake of food but in order to keep this activity going. He desires to kill or to run away for the same reason. He desires most what is most closely identified with his own being. His supreme desire is to be what he is.

This definition will apply equally well to dogs or any other living creatures. It is a matter in which thought does not enter at all: with or without thought it is just the same.

It has also been said that knowledge multiplies and facilitates desires. Its position is that of a servant called in to assist. It does not question the value of the work upon which it is set. It does not ask what is the use of all this activity. Where is the point of discovering how to accumulate food, of obtaining bodily security, of multiplying creature comforts? It may be said that human reason does ask these questions. In an academic sort of way, indeed, it does so; but it gets no answer, and it returns to its ordinary human avocations, its work and its dinner and its wife, with interest unimpaired. The truth is that, whatever reason may say, what we call life cannot have a negative value. Being alive and wishing to be alive are one and the same thing. It is life which gives value to anything which life contains: if

you value the whole you must value the parts, and the parts are valuable because the whole is. While we have life we cannot help valuing it, and reason has nothing to do with the matter.

What reason is attempting to do in applying its own values to life must be discussed in the next book. It is enough to say here that the standard of value which rules life is that created by life itself. Any difficulty there may be in recognizing this is because value in the daily sense of the word is measured by reference to some fictitious and quite arbitrary standard; money, for example, is measured by the fictitious standard of the value of gold, which we ourselves have created. In the case of life we have to do with a standard which we did not create, but are born into. Though we may not like it we have no means of rejecting it.

It will be seen that what has hitherto been called desire is really the same as value, and that the terms are interchangeable. Which is the better term would be hard to decide; both have to be used a little out of their ordinary meaning. Desire has been used hitherto because it is a condition with which we are all familiar.

Since it is apparent that we cannot ask why life is worth living it remains merely to analyse so far as we can the general principles upon which it makes itself seem attractive. Human nature seems to desire all sorts of things in all sorts of degrees. What general principle, if any, underlies these manifestations?

Here we must seek the analogy of a game. Any game is governed by a set of rules which is quite arbitrary, and the purpose of the game is to solve the problem created by those rules. The game may be purely mental, like chess played without a board; at the other extreme it

contains a large element of bodily activity, the activity being not aimless but governed by the rules.

In short, a game is a mental problem, and like all problems its formula is, *granted such and such conditions what consequences will follow, or what can be done?*

In a sense, games are meaningless, in the sense, that is, that they have no meaning outside themselves. The purpose of a game is to play it, and though the bystander may call it ridiculous his criticism is irrelevant. Any game is amusing so long as you are playing it, and only so long.

It follows from all this that the common distinction between work and play does not altogether hold good; for the characteristics of work are precisely those of a game. Work also is a mental problem, namely, given certain conditions how are you to attain certain results. Some work is more active; some is less. The sole difference is one quite extraneous, namely, that some forms of work are useful because they are regarded as necessary. Yet as a great many games are also regarded as useful because of the effects they have for the community generally, utility alone will not form a criterion. The fact is that any community forms a standard as to what it regards as necessary to its life; work is that which must be done to maintain those standards, and the rest is play. But the creation of a standard of utility is merely another example in problem making, of what I must do to attain certain results. In this case, as in any other, the bystander can always ask what is the point of all this fuss and worry, and, as usual, his criticism is irrelevant. 'Why,' the Australian Arunta might ask the European, 'why exert yourself in this way?

Why not take things as I do?' All he is really asking is, why not play my game and not yours?

The conclusion is that man in making up games is merely imitating the conditions upon which he lives his life. Every game played within life is nothing but an illustration of life itself. There are certain arbitrary conditions common to all forms of life, the need, for example, of obtaining food and security; but there is a variety of ways of solving these problems, and outside these limits the variety of the problems which man sets himself is infinite.

Life is a game which does not come to an end. That games should end is not a necessity but a misfortune. The purpose of a problem is not to solve it, but to have it to solve; the purpose of a game is to play it, not to finish it, though both finish and solution are inevitable consequences. The more complicated a game, the better it is; so it happens that many people make a game of what their neighbours would call work: a man who is absorbed in what he is doing would be hard put to it to say whether it was work or play.

Taking play to be the setting and solving of problems, of all grades of complexity and bodily movement, one may define man as pre-eminently the creature that plays. Not that he is alone in this. All creatures play to some extent; the difference seems to be that while they play mostly when they are young, man, the more he grows the more he plays. Many men, of course, exhibit that lethargy which seems to overtake the mature of all species; but even this is a game of a sort.

Play, therefore, instead of being an accessory is of the very essence of human nature. It has often been wrongly regarded as a kind of preparation for the 'serious' work

of life. Puppies are supposed to scuffle in order that they may fight better when they are dogs. If that were so the fighting would be real, for mimic warfare has mighty little utility. In any case we have seen that utility is a broken reed, being itself a form of play. The truth is that creatures play because living is playing. Words like 'serious' and 'trivial' are man-made; they have no place in nature, where the mature life is no more 'serious' than the immature.

The interest of life is the interest of a game. I play for certain stakes; if I play for nothing else I must play for my food. But with a mind I can diversify the game. I set myself this goal or that; to reach them I must make certain moves, which will require thinking out. I meet various impediments against which I must take measures. When I reach my goal I find others beyond. So the interest never ceases till life ceases.

Life, therefore, is pleasant. In a game of football I get many bruises. In life I have many disappointments, some of which may be crushing; but it is pleasant for all that. If it were not, I should cease to live, not by committing suicide—for by such a hazard a man reveals the strongest of interests in the game—but by that kind of apathy which one sees in neurasthenic cases. A real loss of interest infallibly brings death.

Such conceptions as happiness and unhappiness are really foreign to life. There exists neither the one nor the other. There are degrees of interest only. If my problem is working out I feel pleased; if it baffles me I am disappointed. Pleasure and pain[1] are relative to

[1] Physical pain appears in the first instance to be connected with the emotion of anger, and to be intended to secure that the more you are hurt the more fiercely you fight. A man who stubs his toe is very angry; the pain makes him so, though there is nothing to fight. As

achievement. If I get no chance in life of playing the game I most like I call myself unhappy; and so, in a manner of speaking, I am. But neither, at the other extreme, could I ever be completely happy. There is no state of ultimate and unending felicity. Little by little bliss gives place to acquiescence in the new state; new possibilities are opened up, and the summit of pleasure is insensibly once more transferred to the future.

Modern eyes are rather blinded in this matter, for men are actually living in conditions which nothing could render happy except unnatural remedies such as drink. But these conditions are not necessary to human nature, and no argument can be drawn from them. They are diseases of the community, and like diseases of the body they are not normal.

On this showing, man does not live in order to pursue pleasure. Pleasure is not ahead of him, but with him at every moment. There is the pleasure of conception, the pleasure of execution, the pleasure of achievement; each stage of the problem has its own pleasure, and the pleasure is not a thing apart, but arises out of the problem. You pursue the problem and you get the pleasure.

It may be said that not all pleasures are of the problem kind; that there are bodily pleasures, of eating, drinking, and making love, which do not fall in this category.

The distinction, however, does not appear to be fully made out. What one may call the bodily element in pleasure is present in all forms of game or problem making. It is what we call excitement. Nor is it true

usual, 'Nature' in arranging these mechanisms has taken no account of disease, whereby the same mechanisms might be brought into play without serving any advantage.

without qualification that there are certain bodily pleasures to which man is naturally more prone. It is true that men of a certain mental level will show a certain resemblance in what they regard as pleasures. It is also true that certain bodily functions must of their nature always come first in the order of satisfaction. Everything in life, for example, depends upon your getting food. But it is not true to say that the bodily pleasures which come first are also the strongest. In most cases the pleasures of gluttony soon pall. The reason is that the problem element is not capable of sufficient diversification. Like the game of noughts and crosses, the possible moves are soon exhausted. And if gluttony does not pall, it is because the man is not mentally capable of anything more complicated.

The strength, therefore, of the so-called bodily pleasures is in part due to weakness of mind, and should be recognized as such. In part it is due to the fact that certain mechanisms are necessary to the continuance of the species, and their power arises not from the pleasure they offer but from the importance of their function. Indeed, in their crude state they hardly rank as pleasures. Rather than be hungry one would cheerfully sacrifice the pleasures of eating. If one considers the mating of creatures, with all that it involves in the way of nest-building, fighting, provision of food, guardianship of the young, and terrible physical exhaustion (consider for example the appearance of a salmon kelt or a rutting stag), to talk of pleasure seems silly. It is a pleasure to breathe if one has been throttled a few minutes; but it is not a pleasure to be throttled. So there is a pleasure in escaping out of the grip of a blind necessity; there is a pleasure in fighting, though few

would fight if they could help it. In fact, when one is dealing with instincts, it would be hard to say whether they were pleasures or pains ; the words do not seem to apply.

But it is quite clear that when a man uses his bodily propensities to give him pleasure he does so in the same forms as he would play any other game. He plays with his hunger as he would with anything else. A child leaves the nice bits to the last ; a dog eats them up first. We elaborate our food, not that it may satisfy hunger—which is effected either way—but that it may offer a harmonious variety of tastes. There is all the difference in the world between the polished ritual of human love-making and the brute reproduction of the herd.

All pleasures are bodily, and all pleasures contain the problem element. We take the raw material as it comes. Instincts are raw material in the same way as are fifty-two painted cards, or an iron-headed club with a little white ball, or a laboratory equipment. That these and other things can be worked up into pleasures is a fact for which no reasons can be given ; for to ask such a question is merely another instance of our pleasure in formulating problems. And as to why men's pleasures vary so much only a general answer is possible. In the first place they vary according to mental capacity. A man who delights only in eating and drinking must have a poor mind ; a man who likes mathematics must obviously have a subtle one. But we cannot estimate the relative powers of mind by a comparison of pleasures. A footballer has not necessarily a worse mind than a golfer or a botanist ; this is obvious, inasmuch as the same man may be all three. Only in extreme cases can we see much difference between one mind and

another. The difference between men's pursuits is plainly relative to their natures, that individuality which is inexpressible in thought. In pleasures the distinction which we so cheerfully make between mind and body proves very vague. Can we say of a footballer that he was impelled to the game by a predisposition of mind or of body? Clearly of both, but there is no means of ascertaining in what proportion each contributed.

Secondly, man is influenced in his choice of pleasures by force of habit: the son of an oarsman will be brought up to row, the son of a naturalist will be influenced by his father, and unless his bent is strongly antagonistic he will pursue the course shown him. It is true that on the present theory only a special game of his own invention is really suited to him; but life is not long enough for such refinements, nor games so different. We take the world as we find it, and leave it to those of special qualifications to alter its contours.

Whatever life, then, man is living, and at whatever grade, he finds it interesting, and for the same reason. It appears as a problem to solve, a game to play. Regarded as a trick of nature—if we care to personify her—a trick to ensure that the species should not die out, it must win our admiration. If any goal were set to life, any final state, it is clear that having attained it the species might die out from lack of interest and because there was nothing more to do. It is equally clear that if nothing were attainable the same lack of interest might arise. But as things are it is ensured that whatever the degree of comparative progress the same interest is present. There is always a problem to solve, in which failure or success is merely comparative. Whether you win or lose the game, you have had it.

SECTION 6.

CHOICE, DELIBERATION, AND RESPONSIBILITY

ALL activity, being purposive, implies a certain degree of choice. The simplest creature that can move can choose either to stop or to go on. Choice, therefore, is not evidence of a mind, since it is exercised by creatures we do not credit with a mind. What it does point to is that mind is not in any essential different from body: the only distinction seems to be that body has a spatial shape and mind has not.

Greater capacity for choice we identify with greater mental capacity; and mental capacity we measure in terms of knowledge. If we define life as stimulus and reaction, the effect of thought is to elaborate both the stimulus and the reaction. It is a dubious task to conjecture the mental organization of the amoeba; but inasmuch as it moves and holds and eats with the same organs, it is a fair guess that it does not make the same distinction between moving and grasping and eating that we do. A specific action implies a specific stimulus; you run for one set of causes, you grasp for another, and so on. This is well seen in the fact that some savages have a different name for the same relationship according to whether or not it is lawful to marry that relation. Our own language shows the same thing. You refer to me as 'you'; I refer to you as 'you'. To ourselves we are both 'I'; that is, the same entity has a different name according to the difference of our active relations with it.

Thus every development of knowledge brings a development of action, and, conversely, every develop-

ment of action brings a development of knowledge. You fiddle, maybe, aimlessly with a piece of string and discover a string puzzle; you accidentally bring a sensitized silver plate in contact with vapour of mercury, and discover photography. Each new movement and each new thought insensibly mould and alter the whole field in which we think and act, and the difference between our world and a baby's is this multiplication of possibilities. But the resemblance between our world and the baby's is that both alike are a composite of stimulus and reaction.

In the same way, just as increasing knowledge releases us from a small circle of action, so does it tend to widen the distinction between what we do and what we know. With the puppy, to see a thing is to eat it; the kitten cannot refrain from running after the ball of string. The stimulus brings the response almost automatically; which is as much as to say that the stimulus is the response. The animal knows a thing as much by what it does to the thing as it knows it in itself. The division with which we are familiar, between an agent who is capable of an infinity of actions and an acted-on which is open to an infinity of arrangement, can only come by knowledge. We distinguish between ourselves and our actions, the world and what is done to it; the animal barely, if at all, distinguishes between what it is and what it does, between the world and what is done to it.

The consequence of this argument is that the division of the world into things or objects is really a division into possibilities. A thing is not a thing for what it is but for what it suggests in the way of reaction. It is, in fact, a consolidated choice. We do not apprehend a thing first and then consider what we shall do: we

apprehend its possibilities with itself. It may be asked, if you meet a thing for the first time how can you apprehend its possibilities? The answer is that the less you know about a thing the more elementary are your reactions. When you suddenly and unexpectedly encounter a thing, when, say, you put your hand in the dark on something soft and cold, your predominating emotion is a thrill of fear. All people have been conscious of feeling supremely ridiculous because some one they did not know was there has addressed them, and made them jump out of their skins. But the moment is interesting, for in it we are recovering the experiences of primitive man. We get some comprehension of what it feels like to have no knowledge, and why it is worth some trouble to acquire. When knowledge reasserts its sway and you learn what startled you, your fear goes and once more several courses of action are open to you.

Knowledge, therefore, does not make choice, but enlarges it. The question why a man chooses one course rather than another is no more than another form of asking why he plays one game rather than another, and, as already seen, cannot be completely answered. A man's life is in the last resort peculiar to himself, though it has features in common with the lives of his neighbours. He plays several games at once, and these games are also played by others; but the exact proportion in which he mixes these games is something which he alone decides.

Thus, when he makes a choice, the issue may not be altogether clear. He may be wanting to be out in the sun enjoying himself when his circumstances demand that he should be earning his living. The conflict arises out of conditions over which he has no control, for many

men are compelled to work at that which does not interest them, and often to an excessive degree. They are playing a game they do not wish to. But even where a man's work is exactly what he would wish a conflict of another sort is possible. Two lines of research, say, offer themselves; which is he to choose when he has not the time to undertake both? Or how is he to adjust his family interests with the other interests he has? Conflicts like these are bound to arise in the most ideal state, and they cannot be decided except arbitrarily. Few are so simply made that they do not have interests which as they are worked out come into opposition. Knowledge can help to a certain extent, for by its means a man can take broad views and inflict an arbitrary consistency on his activities; but the conditions of life are so complex that there is neither time nor inclination to submit all the actions of a day to such a scrutiny. We content ourselves with broad outlines. There is, indeed, no particular merit in consistency. The pressure of circumstance will always limit the natural impulse which we feel to experiment in more than one direction; but consistency in itself is a poor ideal.

Deliberation is the endeavour to make explicit and to adjust our natural tendencies. In many of the games of man it is easy to see what you must or must not do to attain certain ends. If you want to write a book you must not go out fishing, for example. The game, so to speak, follows from the rules. But in a more complicated game, bridge, say, or politics, deliberations can only give a provisional answer; the conditions are too complicated. In other words, the idiosyncrasies of men are not altogether expressible in knowledge.

Responsibility must be measured in the same way. It

is a standard based on observation of the extent to which man can control his desires by knowledge. Social living requires that certain things should not be done and that others should; you must not murder your neighbour, and must, on the other hand, actively support the forces of law and order. The greater number of people see these things without any telling, but for the rest it is necessary to assist their minds in forming a judgement, so it is made clear to them that if they take another's life they will be tried for their own. Those who murder in spite of this have either had their knowledge mastered by their passions or think in some way or other to escape the penalty.

Both law and practice recognize varying degrees of responsibility. Juries of to-day hesitate to bring in verdicts of *felo de se*; by a verdict of temporary insanity they recognize that the party was not responsible for his act. While the law could not accept the plea of an erring trustee that he was notoriously absent-minded, common sense admits that some people are little better than children in affairs. On the other hand, both law and common sense are beginning to assign responsibility where hitherto it was not thought to exist.

The doctrine, therefore, has no metaphysical implications. It is sometimes argued that if you deny that responsibility means the freedom of the will, you put it within the power of any man to say that he was not responsible for what he did, that it was 'his nature to'; and that in consequence the whole fabric of society will break down. It might equally well be argued that because a cat chastens her kittens she has a conception of free will. The implications of free will must be deferred for the next book; as regards responsibility,

all that it does and need say is that within limits man can control his actions, that is, exercise choice. The fabric of society has been built up on this, not on any metaphysical speculations. When a savage beats his gods for not bringing him what he desires he is applying the doctrine of responsibility, and, curiously enough, in a manner in which a good many moderns would hesitate to copy him, particularly those who are most concerned for free will.

SECTION 7. HUMAN DESTINY

IT will have been seen that, according to the present book, man has little knowledge of, or control over, his destiny. With one exception—his moral notions—he is, like any other creature, well adapted to live as he does live. But his lot is not one of his own choosing, nor one that he would choose, if he had any say. His position resembles that of a prisoner awaiting trial; he has his own room which he can dispose according to his taste; he can even order in things from outside; what he cannot do is leave his room.

This is a matter which has produced a great deal of theorizing. Some persons, whose moral convictions have run away with them, are unwilling to admit a condition so lacking in dignity, and by all sorts of names and titles try to make out that he is better off than he looks. Their arguments need not be discussed here. The opposite school is bound by a passion for consistency, and sees no reason to claim for man a fate higher than that of any other natural object. Law, they say, rules the universe, and why should man escape it?

Theories of this sort require some examination, not so much for their own importance as because the principles which govern human knowledge are involved. When I lift my eyes from my immediate concerns and begin to rationalize at large, with what propriety or what success do I do so?

Without giving secrets away, one can answer, with no propriety and no success. No statement can be made upon a matter of which no experience is possible. To answer, however, is not so interesting as to consider how the fallacy arises.

To begin first with the idea of law. It will be apparent that the word is an analogy, and not a very good one. Human law is something which you can obey or not as you choose; it is imposed not by any inherent necessity but by penalties. Law in the cosmic sense is just the opposite; it is something in things by which they abide in virtue of their own nature, something which is there even when you do not know it is there. There is no choice, there are no exceptions, and, naturally, there are no penalties.

There is a common tendency to think that scientific research has introduced us to the reign of law. Nothing of the kind. The existence of law is assumed in the most elementary act of thought. I cannot drop sugar in my tea except on the assumption that it will melt, as it did the last time. I cannot walk to the station except on the assumption that it remains where I left it last night.

The truth is that there is no opposite to the notion of law. That some things are haphazard and that others are operated by law is an inconceivable contrast. There is as much law in the statement that things change and may not be to-morrow what they are to-day as in a state-

ment to the contrary. A world in which there was no law would be tantamount to a world in which what you thought was not true—and even this does not describe it, for what you thought would not even be not true.

It is not only, then, that things obey laws. Things are laws. The very names they have are fossil laws. When an object is distinguished so far as to be given a name, when, in other words, it becomes a distinction for thought, two equal and opposite movements are implied; in the first place that thing is marked off from the rest of the world, in the second—which is not so obvious—the rest of the world is marked off from it. That is, the elaboration of the world into a variety of objects is nothing but an attempt to recognize its underlying laws. There is no difference in essence between calling a thing water and calling it H_2O. There is no difference in essence between saying that the wind moves the trees and saying—as a child does—that the trees make the wind. Both are attempts to state a law.

The difference between the scientist and the child lies not in their claim to state law but in the accuracy of their observation. As already pointed out, the senses are more concerned with rousing a reaction than with imparting truth; and all human thought has this defect that it does not go beyond the matter in hand unless compelled. The so-called evidence of the senses is of the nature of thought, but it is thought of a very low grade, that is, it is full of confusion.[1] For example, our skin sensations of temperature, our muscular sense of weight, our visual estimates of size, deceive us lamentably. The first necessity is to supplement these by reference to

[1] Thought is rule of thumb for the individual; knowledge is law for the mass. The difference between them is one of consistency.

standards of which we can be sure. We therefore invent scales of one sort and another.

But none of these devices alters the raw material. Whether we weigh an object in our hands or by the balance makes no difference to it. As before stated, we add only to our knowledge of it; and our knowledge of it, for want of a better method, we call *it*.

Nor is the use of the senses in any way dispensed with. All standards are ultimately referred to some sense or other, usually the eye. We read off weights on a scale; we test for acids by the colour of litmus paper, and capture invisible reactions by means of a photograph. Whatever the subtlety of the devices to replace one sense by another, or to make them record what in their normal use would be beyond their observation, on the senses we must ultimately rely for our data.

Thus the methods of science are simply those of every-day life refined and improved. Their effect is not to render us independent of the senses but to make one sense a check on another, and at the same time so to multiply and diversify our sensations that we seem to be looking at a new world.

These new objects of the senses, just like the old, carry with them their own laws. You cannot apprehend a thing without apprehending to some degree the relations in which it stands with other things.

It may be urged that science is always discovering new relations between things. True; but we in our normal lives are doing the same. Relations between things can be, like the things themselves, vague and precise, and greater precision in knowledge of things implies greater precision in knowledge of their relations.

The common distinction, therefore, between theory

and fact does not hold good, so long as it implies—as it certainly does in common speech—that facts are something different from theories, or that facts come first and theories after. This can be best shown by illustrations.

If I see a ball kicked, I say that the kick impelled the ball, and that the latter is theory while the ball is fact. But the theory is not a subsequent discovery; it is apprehended along with the fact. All simple apprehensions are of this kind; we not only see things happen, but also, more or less, the way they happen.

If, however, I watch a conjuring trick, I see something done, but I do not see how it is done. In this case I have to make up a theory to account for the facts, which do not carry with them their own explanation. Here, it might be said, the facts come first and the theory afterwards; but this is not so. The facts as they come first are only the facts as they appear. On the surface something seems to have happened; the conjurer has touched the lady with his wand and dissipated her into thin air, or whatever it may be. If one accepted this at its face value there would be no conjuring trick: it is precisely because it conflicts with our ordinary notions that it amuses on the one hand and drives us to seek a further explanation on the other. This amounts to saying that the facts as they first appear are not the same as the facts as they are ultimately shown to be. In altering your theory about the facts you alter the facts.

To take another example. A dead body is found, bearing marks of violence: it remains to establish the means by which the person died. Here, unlike the conjuring trick, there is nothing contradictory in the facts; they require amplifying only. It is therefore attempted to conjecture from the identity of the body, the nature

of the wounds, the marks of a struggle, and so on, how he met his death. A theory of this sort only comes after the facts in the sense that they were capable of several interpretations, and it is uncertain which is the right one. Further, two sorts of conjecture are possible ; there is the conjecture which is right, and there is the conjecture which fits the facts, but even so is not the way in which the thing actually happened. Men have been hanged through a mistake of this kind, a mistake which has become apparent later by the turning up of some fact which renders the conjecture impossible.

All scientific theory, then, must be regarded in this way. Either the accumulation of carefully recorded fact points unmistakably to a theory, as when the presence of a certain microbe with a certain disease demonstrates that the microbe is in some sense the cause of that disease. Or certain facts are recorded, and a theory is wanted to account for those facts. The theory may be right and it may be wrong ; it all depends upon the accumulation of further evidence. Dalton's atomic theory is an illustration. It was not generally accepted for some time, but all the subsequent evidence endorsed it.

The important point is that theory depends on facts, and facts on theory. Between the two sides there is a balance ; if the facts are poor the theory will be extravagant ; if the facts are rich the theory becomes practically identified with them. Both are necessary elements in the process of thought, indeed, they follow from the nature of knowledge ; for if knowledge is never complete, some parts will be vaguer than others, and the vague parts will be represented by what we commonly know as theory. But if the theory is adequate, it will one day take its place as a fact.

For reasons of this kind the statement that the function of thought is to discover natural laws is mere tautology. Thought could not do otherwise. Similarly, to say that all thought proceeds on the assumption that there is law in nature contains an element of deception. An assumption, in common speech, is something which you can assume or not, as you choose. Here there is no such choice. Thinking is the discovery of natural law; in other words, law is thought and thought is law.

Commonly speaking, we are sufficiently satisfied as regards discovering law when we have discovered what we are pleased to call the cause of the particular series of facts which we may happen to be considering: when, in other words, we see what we must do to repeat the experiment. We see a ball kicked, and we say that the kick is the cause of the ball moving. We analyse water into hydrogen and oxygen, and we say that the compounding of these two elements is the cause of water. Why this should be so does not trouble us; we are content with the fact. Cause, in fact, is an expression less of a quality in things than of our power over them. It is an arbitrary point in the world of knowledge signifying 'Here you can enter and effect your purpose'. It is not too much to say that if man had no power of acting he would have no word for cause.

As an abstract term Cause is singularly valueless. It is the failure to recognize this which has led to mistaken conceptions of the destiny of man or of the nature of the universe. Consider, for example, such a theory as Mechanism. In the universe, it is contended, nothing is seen but cause and effect; one event is followed by another in strict and monotonous regularity. Man is but

the necessary consequence of fixed laws, which determine every moment of his life.

Now so far as saying that cause and effect reign supreme in the universe means that the result of thinking is to discover laws, it is, as has been seen, true but not exciting. But so far as it is an attempt to state the limitations of man or the universe it is completely ineffective. To begin with, the meaninglessness of the word cause can be demonstrated by arguments familiar to any student of metaphysics. Perhaps they had better be rendered briefly here.

Every cause is itself the effect of some other cause. What is the difference between it as cause and it as effect? Clearly none, except that as cause it looks towards the future and as effect it looks towards the past. But if there is no difference how can a cause produce an effect?

Again, the effect of a cause is largely determined by qualities in the thing acted on. If I kick a ball, whether I can move it depends upon whether it is made of lead or rubber. Therefore the rubber must be included among the causes of the ball moving. But where is this process to stop? All circumstances have an influence on the act. All the events which led up to the meeting between the ball and my foot must be regarded as causes, inasmuch as if one of these had not happened the ball and I would never have come together. No single circumstance, therefore, can rightly be regarded as sole cause. But, inasmuch as we do not know and cannot know all the preceding circumstances, how can we be sure we are right in assigning causes?

Such arguments can be multiplied indefinitely as against any attempt to put one's finger on any specific

point in space or time and say 'This is cause' or 'This is effect'. They are academic arguments, and the practical answer is crushing and complete, 'I don't care what you may call it: all I know is that I can kick the ball'. And this answer contains the truth of the matter; cause is not capable of any abstract meaning, but, like such terms as standpoint or perspective, has meaning only when used in a definite connexion. A cause is a point from which we can exercise control over events. To say that cause is universal is rather like saying that perspective is universal. It is, but it means something different in every case.

The idea that the essence of the universe can be summed up in a phrase exists in many forms; but in most the mechanistic theory is underlying. In any event, all generalizations are dangerous to the uninitiated. There are generalizations like the electro-magnetic theory of light and heat, which sums up a whole diversity of manifestations under one formula. It is the only admissible type of generalization, because it is capable of being demonstrated as regards each particular manifestation which it seeks to explain. But there is a type of generalization which is so only by disregarding all differences; and the mechanistic theory is an example. It is positively silly to contend that a man walking up a mountain is governed by the same laws as control him when falling down a precipice. Choice is not the same as necessity, and though choice does not imply free will, neither does it suggest that it is capable of being reduced to a physical formula. The fact is that in such matters we must be content with ignorance until knowledge is won. Just as astronomical evidence accumulated until the idea that the sun rose and set became a myth, so, if human beings care

to take the trouble, shall we acquire a better understanding of the relations of sense thought and activity. But nothing is gained if we end by saying that the very puzzles which started us off do not exist; and this is what saying that life is but the working of inexorable law amounts to. If the 'laws of life' were indeed the 'laws of nature' we should never have been perplexed.

SECTION 8.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF EXISTENCE

IT remains to consider what a life offers which is compounded of the ingredients discussed in detail in the previous sections. Man is a co-operative creature; he is active, and his activity is the expression of a personality; he employs thought to minister to his activity; and his activity gives him pleasure. His essential feature, to which everything else is but a conductor, is his activity. He does not act in order to think, but thinks in order to act. He does not act in order to win pleasure, but pleasure is the outcome of his activity.

And this activity is not explicable in thought. We neither understand why he should be active, nor do we know what forms his activity will take. Some people take their pleasure in life for granted; but those who ask questions are no better off, for asking questions is only their way of taking pleasure in life, their own peculiar activity. Whatever we do we can only live. Thinking is but a consequence of living, and we cannot explain the part by the whole.

It is to be expected, therefore, that life should exhibit every kind of variation. The comparative study of the human races is calculated to sober enthusiasm. What an

ethnological museum reveals of perverted ingenuity, grotesque custom, and seeming content with conditions hopelessly abhorrent to any law whether of nature or reason, is a clear indication how lucky that chance was, and how narrow, which enabled a section of the human race to acquire a certain self-respect. The names, or even the memory, of those individuals who set us on our feet are forgotten, of course; but it is them we must thank that we are not to this day crawling in the bush to murder and eat our neighbours, or intoxicating ourselves with uncouth dances within a circle of stinking huts.

It is not always realized that, just as we got out by an effort, so it requires an effort to keep out. The life of man is not an easy progress towards greater and greater perfection; in fact, neither progress nor perfection is in the least necessary to life.

The secret of our own growth is contained in the application of thought to our affairs. Whether or not we continue in the same path depends entirely on the effort we make to increase this application. While it is true that civilization has a certain amount of momentum, so that we can enjoy its benefits without consciously making any positive contribution to its advancement, none the less the amount of dead weight it can carry is limited. Institutions can continue long after their use has disappeared: they were established to serve a certain purpose, but unless the purpose they were intended to serve is continuously present to the mind, it may, and does, happen that they continue when their effect is the direct opposite of what was intended.

If there is one criticism to be made of our own times it is that thinking is too much delegated to a small minority. Thinking is hard, hard in the same way as physical

exercise is hard, for, as has been suggested, the progress of thought is, for us humans, indicated by the extent to which we succeed in rendering it in terms of mental imagery, this imagery being nothing but a form of muscular activity. But, just as it is easier to watch an equilibrist than to imitate him, just as we can criticize his dexterity, so it is possible for those who are not capable of original thought to approve and assist those who are. It is possible to make a habit of taking exercise; it is equally possible to make a habit of taking thought. Without a continuing and positive recognition that by thought only are we what we are, a recognition pervading equally all members of the community, not only can there be no progress, but we cannot even remain as we stand. Our activity is much too manifold to permit any institution to embrace all its possibilities. The defect of all social institutions is that out of the tranquillity which they provide is born the criticism that will destroy them. They are the nursery of wits, and they cannot foretell what will be reared. In a sense, therefore, they are always and necessarily out of date. And while, on the one hand, they tend to be a little inferior to the men that must live by them, on the other they have not hitherto been the work of unfettered common sense. To a greater or less degree they are a compromise with moral convictions which—to anticipate the argument of the next book—need not be, and often are not, sensible. The second defect may be remedied, but the first is inevitable so long as the mind continues to develop, and can be palliated only if each man is competent to appreciate both the purpose of the institutions as a whole, and the extent to which they further, or have ceased to further, this purpose as regards himself. No one can tell exactly

where another's shoe pinches, and it is not his business, seeing that we are all provided with brains. He who will not think for himself is absorbing the time and attention of others. There exists, indeed, a paternal theory that it is the function of a minority to fend for a mass incapable of thinking for itself. But the danger of this theory is that as a rule the remedy comes too late for the disease. Incapable or not, the mass is always thinking, and if it cannot think right it will think wrong. It will inaugurate changes that are not necessary, and oppose changes that are. Ignorant, it is at least aware of its own power. If it were once recognized that thought is the sole insurance of civilization, ignorance in this sense could not be.

So it comes about that though man was not born to think but to act he has this recompense, that the more he thinks the more he acts. By making thought the conscious aim of our endeavour we do the best possible for our prime function. There is no inherent necessity in our being which drives us to pursue such an ideal, but once it is pursued it has such obvious advantages in deepening and intensifying the sense of being alive that we should be fools to fall away. We should no longer regard thought as the last resort, the servant called in to clear away the mess : it should become what it in fact is, the first and the last concern of every human being.

It may be well to outline what the effect would be on the human community. First, of course, that blind and unreasoning opposition to novelty would disappear. No man, according to his capacity—and human capacity is not very different—would be a stranger to thought, and he would be able to form a judgement both as to what was wanted and how to get it. He would no longer be

dependent on the statement of interested parties either as to mistakes or their remedies. The follies of partisanship, which under ignorance masquerades as thought, would disappear. Social institutions would be fluid, simply because when a man has a map he has no need of signposts. A fixed order is all very well for those who would go wrong without it, but for the others it is a hindrance. After all, more dependence is placed even now on common sense than is commonly realized. There has been no dearth of good laws since the beginning of time; the difficulty has been to get them obeyed. Our own social security is derived in the main from consent and not from compulsion, and it is only a development of this to say that thinking man would need no laws, however remote such a prospect may be.

But in the end social institutions have only a relative importance. Not one is worth preserving for its own sake. They are necessary but not interesting, and happy alone is he who has never heard of an Act of Parliament. The purpose of the community is to serve the needs of its members, to enable them to live that life which is the peculiar and intransferable property of the individual. He will play his own games, and it is here that thought will help him; for the only games that last are those in which thought has the main share. A great many will devote themselves to intellectual inquiries of one sort and another, but, apart from this, all those games which we commonly regard as relaxations interest according to the measure of thought in them. Even such things as a dinner party or a dance amuse in proportion to the mental vivacity displayed. It is thought which makes a joke or tells a tale, which can indicate sympathy or displeasure in a way which carries. A society of thinkers is not a society of pedants.

This point has some importance, for however much the individual may be absorbed in his own occupations the salt of living comes from contact with his neighbours. In the last resort that which is most continuously pleasing for the most of us is the variety of human character. Not all of us have the power to live a life of intense application, and even those who can are not without human relationships. If thought is our work, affections will be our play, always as now. While all application of thought to definite ends must have a utilitarian aspect, in this quarter at least it maintains its essential quality of play, and it is in this quarter that it most needs to develop. It is obvious, but in practice not always recognized, that the greatest understanding and forbearance is necessary to maintain or cultivate friendships. The obstacles to friendship are in the main prejudice and ignorance; both alike spring from artificial differences in modes and manners of existence. It follows that if the cultivation of thought is made the conscious aim these obstacles will be removed from both ends: for the common aim will remove artificial distinctions, while at the same time increasing familiarity with thought will make for toleration. It will be seen, in fact, that the charm of character lies in its peculiarity.

Character is perhaps to a certain extent misunderstood. A man who has a violent temper and misuses his family is sometimes said to have character. Any dominating feature, like ruthless ambition or imperiousness, is regarded as a mark of character. Yet if we have a vicious horse we shoot it; only in the human form do we tend to tolerate such aberrations. Such things are in fact qualities run wild for want of knowledge. The difference between crustiness and bad temper may be hard

to define, but it is easy enough to see. The boundaries between character and perversity are not hard to establish for a community that is interested in doing so.

The 'art of living' is no mere phrase. It is the essence of the nature and possibilities of human existence. It is the supreme art, of which the other arts are but offshoots. In any art two stages can be distinguished, the period of training, and the period in which the powers so acquired are freely exercised. Yet no artist would deny that he was learning all his life, while, on the other hand, however crude his powers he is always exercising them. So with life, what is learnt is rendered in practice; the fuller the training the more natural the execution. It is the outcome of conscious deliberation, and this factor must always be present more or less, but only as a means to an end.

Thus the field of human nature is one in which we are all artists, and our success depends on the trouble we take, and should be measured by the extent to which the endless variety of character is taken up, allowed for, and incorporated. The quality that makes us delight in stories is the quality which we are seeking in life, and which we shall better attain the more we bring to bear the methods and the understanding of the story writer. The arts—in the narrow sense—express those feelings which we are dimly conscious of being at the back of our interest in life, and their method is to take some aspect of life and by heightening contrast or other manipulation contrive to make it express life itself. They are not, that is, adding something new to life but extracting something from it. Without exaggeration, the sense of beauty is the sense of life. The arts discover in a literal sense only; they uncover what is there. The existence

of beauty is a fact, and it is not explained by relating it to something else. It may serve the purposes of reproduction, but this leaves the matter where it was: the existence of beauty as a fact is implied. The doctrine of purposes has only one logical statement: a living thing exists to be what it is, and in being what it is it is beautiful. A statement of this sort holds good under all conditions. A savage society is beautiful to itself; to people, that is, of the same standard of thought or life there is the same standard of beauty. But a society which includes thought among its components will have its beauty altered correspondingly. It will have beauty not as man but as thinking man, which is as much as to say that if it thinks at all it must accept the full consequences of what it has undertaken.

While beauty, therefore, is not the aim of life, it is certainly the consequence of it, and, so far as thought is conscious, it may become the aim. This argument may be developed in another way. If we ask ourselves what we live for (not in any metaphysical sense) we light on difficulties. A great many of our wishes are placed in the future, but that is only because they are not present. If they were present—and assuming the satisfaction they gave were permanent—we should not wish the present to change. We do not therefore live for a future but for the present. The future is, in fact, a conception of thought, compounded out of the knowledge that the present suffers change and that we have desires which the present does not fulfil but which we hope may be fulfilled.

Similarly, the past is that which we remember, that which is no longer present. It is that which the present is not, while the future is that which is not the present.

What, then, is the present? If I try to analyse my present in thought, that present is already past. My present is now occupied with analysing, not with the thing I analyse; and if I try to analyse my analysis, that again is past.

The truth is that the present is not capable of becoming the material of thought. While we think in the present, *what* we think of is either past or future. For thought the present is merely a dividing line of no dimensions between past and future.

And yet without a present we could neither have a future nor a past. Although it is not capable of being presented in thought, it is that which makes past and future possible conceptions of thought. The present is that in which we live and think, that which we must have, and that which we want to have. It is a something of which we are all aware and yet are completely unable to express.[1]

Inasmuch as it is in the present that the purpose of our being is fulfilled, in which we are active, and inasmuch as the present is not expressible in thought, it follows that the purpose of our being is not expressible in thought. For thought the word purpose has always a future

[1] In this connexion what one remembers of his state under an anaesthetic is interesting. Most people on awaking feel as if they had been dragged from a state of intense bliss; some indeed wake in tears, yearning for something they cannot remember.

In unconsciousness there is life without thought, so far as we can attain it. Thought being absent, past and future are absent also, and the present, instead of being a mere dividing line, is there alone, unqualified and therefore perfect. But inasmuch as, while it is, thought is not, we can experience it only as a memory.

Waking states have also this unquestioning acquiescence in the present; this it is which makes us refuse to regard the present as qualitatively the same as past or future. But it is not so intense because we are always thinking.

reference; for life, our purpose is to be what we are, to have a present. Thus it is that the most intimate characteristics of life suffer a certain distortion when reflected in thought. Such terms as purpose, beauty, desire, acquire a tinge of futurity which is necessary for thought but foreign to their essence. The reference by thought of a desire or purpose to the future is a measure of the extent to which thought is able to fulfil it. Where thought is not required desire does not become manifest.

Thus what we want is the present, even though to adjust it to our liking we need thought with its conception of a future. And it must never be overlooked that the present is that which makes all else possible. We live for the present; even discontent with the present is but a modification of the present. And the function of thought is to fill that present, to intensify it. There is a disease of thought which is all too common. Made aware by thought of what life lacks, man is prone to dissatisfaction. Life is short, he thinks, and brings nothing but disappointment. Such considerations, however natural, are really irrelevant. Short or long, disappointing or not, life pursues its inexorable course, and it is absurd to use that which enlarges life as a means of rendering it nugatory. This type of discontent, however, arises for the most part from artificial and unnecessary conditions. It is common in our own time, not because thought has reached the limit of its powers, but because there is so little opportunity for applying it. There are endless ways in which it could be applied at this moment in the service of life, and they are not taken because there is no common agreement as to the necessity, or even the desirability, of thought in human affairs. The capacities of man far outrun his chances of exercising

them, and the result is bitterness of spirit. Yet this, regarded abstractly, is not without promise; for it is true of man merely for the reason that it is a definition of man, that where there is a will there is a way; and if he cannot succeed in finding it, he will at least enjoy himself in failing.

End of BOOK I

BOOK II. MORALS

SECTION 1.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

IT will be seen that in order to live his life man needs nothing but what he has by nature. His activity is given, and in his activity is implied choice, while the development of choice depends on the development of thought. How far these terms are capable of more ultimate explanation only the amount of thought given to them can decide; but it does not seem that the present statement contains such obvious errors as would vitiate its use as a starting-point.

By such statement the difference between man and man, community and community, is reduced to the difference of the extent to which thought is applied to activity. There is no other difference: any man and any community contain, so to speak, precisely the same ingredients. Each is adequate in its own way; purposive, that is, for the purposes envisaged. A savage is not a civilized man half-fledged. The difference between them must be compared to the variety of dogs; only that as man is inseparable from his community the community also must be taken into comparison.

What must not happen is, to continue the analogy, the mixing of strains. Just as the whole fabric of savage organization disintegrates in the proximity of a civilized

race, so do the barbaric elements in a civilization ultimately make for its destruction. A society that elects to live on a basis of custom will prosper within those limits: savagery, that is, is just as long-lived as civilization. But a society that elects to live by thought must be true to its adoption. Thought must be the equal and conscious endeavour of all its members; it cannot be used or dropped at will.

Consider, for example, the conditions in our own society. The organic thought necessary to its maintenance is carried on by a small minority; the other fraction is either incapable or indifferent, or both. The consequence is that those who think waste the greater part of their time in endeavouring to persuade the rest to views, the rightness or wrongness of which should be obvious at a glance. Further, the natural result of stupidity is and always has been fanaticism. The failure to meet thought with thought gives rise to all sorts of passions, so that it is not far wrong to divide modern humanity into cranks on the one hand and dolts on the other; both given to mutual abuse.

Furthermore, though the full consequences of the reign of thought have not been accepted, it has gone sufficiently far to undermine the whole system upon which society was organized. The dominant idea of government has hitherto been to allot certain functions to certain sections, and to maintain more or less intact the divisions between them. The ranks and gradations of birth and wealth and privilege have now been accepted by overwhelming consent for centuries, and it is because they have been accepted that they have formed the point of stability in social organization. Out of them has arisen a network of custom by which have been decided the work, the

pleasures, the remuneration, the whole life, in fact, of the individual.

Thus the true basis of society was custom, not thought; and, having regard to the enormous difficulties involved, it worked remarkably well, and continued to work well so long as the amount of thought brought to bear on material problems remained, on the whole, constant and stationary. But once the system began, for whatever reason, to be questioned, clearly there was no defence. The only possible answer was that such and such things were the custom; and custom has no meaning for thought. They are necessary antagonists, since the purpose of custom is to save one the trouble of thinking, and, once the trouble is taken, it loses its point.

Plainly enough, if there had been any recognizable moment at which one could have said, 'Here the march of thought has reached a point at which it impedes and is impeded by the customary system, and it is necessary to make a fresh start', a good many troubles would have been avoided. But history offers no such moments. The march of thought was insidious; at some points it was welcomed, at others it was execrated. If the 'classes' disliked revolutionary doctrines, the 'masses' equally disliked machines: yet both alike settled down to enjoy in their own fashion the increased wealth which the application of thought to industry had indubitably provided. It never entered their heads that the alteration demanded in their ways of life was radical. You cannot enjoy the fruits of thought without paying the price, or your position is no better than that of the savage who drinks the fire-water of the white man and riots in his top-hat. Without that self-control which is the complement of thought life becomes nothing but an unseemly

struggle in which all grab, and those who grab least abuse loudest; and thought itself nothing but the minister of passion, instead of its master.

Thus our society is formed of rival camps, both of which are equally wrong. Both profess themselves to be the sort of persons who are designed to adorn that ideal state to which thought has given the key—the state where all are equal. The poor call the rich lazy good-for-nothings, and reserve for themselves all the virtues: the rich do the same. Whereas the truth is that both are degenerate products of an age that has gone to pieces, and that neither has the remotest idea what thought is or what it demands. If they had they would realize that a state of human equality is not an ideal but an experiment: there is no means of knowing whether it is feasible, though the tremendous power which knowledge gives over nature justifies good hope. What is certain is that it cannot be attained by any rearrangement of things as they are; the necessary wealth does not exist, still less that tolerance or that genuine interest in the enlargement of thought which are the first requisites.

The modern community stands at a half-way house. It knows too much to be content with the old ways; it knows too little to establish ways of its own. It attempts to combine the science of a new era with the small rivalries and petty ambitions of the old, without the limitations to which these were subject. Like most hybrids, it is at once clever and ugly; possibly also it may prove to be sterile.

When things go wrong it is a common remedy to suggest moral regeneration. If the foregoing arguments are even approximately correct there is no need to go to this length: indeed it is safe to say that from the point

of view of mere statesmanship it would be better if the word and idea of morals could be expunged. The cohesive forces of society, law, custom, and necessity take no account of morality, except so far as the unthinking individual identifies all these things. To any but him they are poles apart. Morality considers only the good, the perfect, the unqualified; it could not be satisfied with anything less. But the urgency of the living moment gives no time for such abstractions; we must content ourselves with what we can get, and rather than dignify our compromises with the name of morality we should face the naked issue with our powers of thought unobscured by dreams of the unattainable. That which more than anything else delays a solution of present tangles is the idea that in some way or other the world can and should be made to satisfy moral aspirations. This is good, that is bad; both by nature and habit we are continually led to form moral judgements. Things, actions, events, history are a riot of opposites as to which we must for ever be taking sides, prompt with our censures or our praise. From this babel there is no refuge, because in moral matters all, of necessity, speak with equal authority.

There is no need to defend morality, or to extol it. A man's consciousness of his moral aspirations is, of its nature, the best thing he has, and it is inevitable that it should be his main, or at least his first, preoccupation. But it is perfectly proper to ask whether it is being put to the best use, or even to a proper use, in being cast through the complexities of daily existence for a whiff of a scent of good or evil. True, there are still persons who talk of 'the simple difference between right and wrong', though in this matter all history as well as common

sense is against them. Is it not time to recognize that the simplicity is due to the force and not to the propriety of our convictions? We confuse the strength of our feelings with the strength of our case: the issue is simple merely because the alternatives are swept away. But this does not go far towards convincing others who also have their moral convictions to ride them.

The consciousness of morality is something which man enjoys in his own right. It is not a diploma awarded on any earthly comparison of merits. In this fact resides both its virtue and its limitations. Just because the moral nature does not depend on any qualities of mind or body, those qualities remain unaffected. If a man is moral though a fool, he is a fool even though he is moral. Neither is he more wise because he is moral nor more moral because he is wise. The capacity, that is, which a man has for ordering his own life or the lives of others remains just what it was before. A muddled head may ruin all his good intentions; nor, on the other hand, is he absolved—as too often he thinks he is—from demonstrating the rightness of his views before he can be permitted to impose them on others. Indeed, if morality is the common possession of all, it gives no right to dictate the conduct of others equally moral; or, if some are not moral it is useless to bind them to moral standards.

Such considerations as these are overlooked in the common attempts to apply morality to daily life. From neglect of them we have the unedifying spectacle of moral beings quarrelling with one another on matters of fact, though it stands to reason that if they differ on moral grounds to start with they must differ eternally, or admit that it is not in morality that they differ; in which case they must drop their self-righteousness and come to

earth. There are two alternatives: either the moralists must confess that wars of religion, torturings, burnings, witch-findings, and other instruments of compulsion are impious travesties of morality, or, if they justify such things, they with their devices must be cast out of the pale of civilization. To such as suppose that acts of this nature are so much dead history it must be answered that the subtler but not less terrible consequences of bigotry are always at hand. Many have had their early years poisoned by some one who has made himself master of their conscience, has terrified them with silly stories of eternal fires, excruciated them with doubts, punished them for what he was pleased to call sins, corrupted the innocence of their pleasures. Under such influences there are many who grow up with the idea that morality is a niggling inquisition into the conduct of neighbours, a competition in preserving appearances. The body, perhaps, does not suffer, but the perversion of all truth and honesty and candour in morals is something much worse. Only one thing is needed for the creation of the perfect villain, which is that he should possess the confidence only to be derived from the conviction that his actions have a moral sanction. This is no mere fancy; the world is full of persons preaching every form of baseness in the name of morality: consider, for example, the contempt of women endorsed by the early fathers of the church, perpetuated in indecent marriage laws; or that offensive preoccupation with sex-relations which for some persons has become exclusively identified with morality. Consider, further, the ever-recurring attempt to restrict freedom of thought on all matters, social or scientific, in the interest of a so-called godliness.

The one solution is that every one should have a full

understanding of the implications of the moral consciousness. Oddly enough, though all men are reputed moral, it is the one subject they are not taught. A few may have access to philosophy, but for the most part moral instruction consists in the indiscriminate imparting of a few precepts which the child as he grows comes to modify or distort in the light of his untutored experience. Yet there have not been wanting persons to do justice to a theme so magnificent, and it is not unworthy to try to acquaint a less learned public with the course and issue of their speculations.

SECTION 2. MORALITY AS TABOO

THE sign of moral judgement is the saying 'This is good', or 'I am good', not in the sense that I like it but in the sense of something which all *ought* to revere, which is good in itself and apart from the uses to which it can be put: absolutely good, as the phrase goes. This applies also to the negative form 'This is or I am not good'.

It follows also that to be good or to do good is a matter of duty. That is to say, the idea of goodness is necessarily associated with the idea of duty: the two ideas are, in fact, aspects of each other, and between them compose morality. Even to a superficial view it is apparent that the one cannot exist without the other; whichever is in front, the other is behind.

Morality as a whole, therefore, turns upon the implications of these two ideas. If I can learn what goodness is I shall know my duty; if I can explain duty I shall know in what goodness consists.

Certain uses of speech, which might mislead, should perhaps be noticed. When a man at a dinner party says

of something he is eating, 'This is very good', he is not attributing to it any moral quality. Though he uses the word good, he means no more than that he likes it. Similarly, when he announces later that he really ought to be going he does not mean that such is his duty. The test is simple: goodness has a moral sense only when the idea of duty is attached, and conversely.

It would be natural to suppose that by going through all the moral precepts which have ever formed part of the code of a human community one might, as it were, find the common factor, and so the key, to moral law. Recent inquirers have collected an enormous mass of material in connexion with the moral codes of communities of all types, to enumerate which in detail would be out of place here. But some study of them is worth making, and without it no conception can be formed of the astonishing complexity of man's moral imagination. Such study reveals at once that there is no uniformity of principle underlying the variety of ordinance, that, on the contrary, anything and everything in the wildest confusion can become the matter of a command. Yet, at the same time, there is no community to which is foreign the essential idea of morality, namely, that there are good and bad acts which it is duty to perform or avoid.

Such examples as are necessary for purposes of illustration may be found most readily in the Pentateuch. These books embody, or profess to embody, those rules which the good Hebrew must obey. They prescribe rites, ceremonies, purifications, food, dress, sex-relations, and other matters; there is scarcely a walk of life which is not touched by them. Particular example may be made of the food ordinances in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus. Here is set down what may and may not be

eaten: the locust, the beetle, and the grasshopper are permitted, but the snail, mole, and chameleon are taboo. The reason for the distinction is not stated. Again, creatures which both chew the cud and divide the hoof are eatable, but not those which do only the one or the other; so that the hare and the pig are taboo. Here, though a reason is given, it is not intelligible.

In the same chapter it is to be noted also that by touching a dead creature, whether that creature is clean or unclean for purposes of food, one becomes unclean, and to remove this ceremonial uncleanness must go into quarantine. An earthen vessel similarly defiled must be broken. A more valuable vessel need only be washed, but in that case the washing-water itself becomes unclean. All through, it will be observed, it is no question of material dirt or material cleanness. It is no question of choosing what is healthy or avoiding what is disgusting, no question of infection or seasonal variation. The things that are clean are clean for ever; the law is unchanging.

These and all other similar precepts are commonly described by a word borrowed from the Polynesians—the taboo. It is important to note that *all taboos are morality in its clearest and most unmistakable form.* The act is a duty because it is good in itself. It is at once the cause and the consequence of goodness. The more senseless the taboo the more this is apparent: there can be no suspicion it is pursued for ulterior reasons. The caste system of the Hindoos is a direct impediment to official measures against plague or famine; but when the native prefers to die by taboo than live by sanitation there can be no doubt of the single-mindedness of his motives. Absurd, disgusting, obscene the taboos often are, but the prejudiced European who calls them immoral is wrong.

If, then, we disregard the matter of the taboo and consider only its form, we see the first essential of morality, duty or goodness for its own sake, and are at the same time aware of one of the great difficulties in the subject, that if you try to demonstrate the goodness of what you do, the clearer the proof the greater the risk of eliminating the essentially moral quality. Once it suits a man's convenience to do his duty, what he does is no longer duty but prudence. It goes without saying that even the most primitive races have some sort of explanation for the taboos to which they conform, and this explanation usually consists in asserting that such conduct is pleasing to the divinities whom they worship or fear. Yet even this statement, though sufficiently unworldly, contains a doubtful element. If to the question, 'Why should you please your god?' a man should answer, 'Because he will ruin me if I don't', his morality becomes a matter of prudence. On the other hand, if he says, 'Because it is my duty to please him', the answer is merely a reassertion of his duty. Thus is reached one aspect of the essential truth of morality, that the conviction of duty does not depend on, nor can it be created by, any form of argument. To be intellectually convinced and to be morally convinced are two different things.

As morality is a commoner possession than philosophy it goes without saying that most folk have believed themselves to have reasons for their convictions, nor have seen the possible harm to their case. Moral codes almost without exception have been associated with some form of deism, and this very naturally. To possess moral certainty, to know that what you feel or do is good, is a god-like rather than a human attribute, and man would be inclined to put the god outside himself rather than within.

Having regard to his mental processes, it is not surprising that he should ascribe his moments of moral conviction to an intimate association between himself and his god, when, as it were, his tongue spoke and his heart swelled with the god's message.

Another factor also would help to the same end. The more primitive the powers of thought the greater the coalescence of scientific with moral and religious theory. The savage who invests a shapeless lump of rock with power, or who insists on certain ceremonies before proceeding to certain acts, is satisfying his religious beliefs and at the same time arguing scientifically, to the best of his knowledge, from cause to effect. The personification of powers, commonly known as animism, is not only the first but the most persistent form of scientific theory. We ourselves speak of Nature as a person, and the savage, arguing in the same manner, presumes that if certain issues, the fulfilment of which he desires, are controlled by spirits, his proper course is to propitiate them. His rites, therefore, have a double aspect; they are good in themselves, but they are also good for the ends desired.

Even when knowledge is much more sure the same tendency survives. The Romans, a very practical people, not in the least inclined to leave to the agency of gods what they could contrive for themselves, never dropped their augurs, though they provided by an ingenious and rather comical method of legal fictions that they should prophesy what was wanted. The less knowledge can help the greater the impulse to invoke unseen agencies: when the future is very obscure few of us can resist making appeals of one sort and another to 'luck'.

For reasons of this kind much of our own morality is not pure. Such survivals as 'I am a jealous god and visit

the sins of the fathers on the children', or 'Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long in the land' are not moral, being in the form of a threat or a bribe. This danger permeates all moral systems which are based on the conception of obedience to a god who controls the course of events, and who will alter them according to whether or not we behave ourselves. In such case the controlling factor is not morality but fear, and it has been difficult or even impossible to eliminate this element in systems we have inherited from earlier peoples, by whom no apology for its presence was thought necessary. The primitive god was expected to enjoy a little slaughter, and his worshippers were anxious to oblige him. Only as time passed did these attributes require purging in order to keep the god in touch with the increasing humanity of man.

Thus the association of the taboo with a god is almost inevitable, and the natural derivation is to say that the god ordained it. If the mind is not as yet trained enough to realize moral conviction as a fact neither capable of nor requiring more ultimate explanation, it can hardly fail to regard it as divinely inspired. It becomes the symbol of a claim in man to be something more than a mere creature of destiny: it becomes an idea of grace, a consciousness of a power transcending earthly forms which gives him confidence to defy all human considerations. This serves to explain the absurdity of the taboo. It expresses, not an earthly necessity, but a relation between a man and his god which requires to be symbolized under certain forms. In doing this and avoiding that he preserves his sanctity, his favour with the god. The obscure mental processes which go to creating the strange and infinite variety of taboos must

be considered at a later stage. Doubtless, at a moment at which he believes himself to be specially favoured, a man creates a taboo, and if his claim is accepted by his fellows the taboo becomes a taboo for all. That is, in the first instance sanctity makes the taboo, though later on and for the weaker brethren the taboo is the way to sanctity.

In a similar manner are to be explained the outrages—not confined to savages—committed under the influence of moral enthusiasm. Believing that he is the voice of the god, and therefore of good, a man can confidently set another to burn, without regard to merely human laws of pity. The moral conviction in its primal form, in endowing man with godlike attributes, tends necessarily to aggrandize the feeling of self. Its first result is to render all things possible to its possessor. Convinced of his election he need restrain no appetite, be bound by no law; for what he does must be good. This peculiarity has been evident at all periods of intense religious feeling; at such times sects have always arisen to proclaim, in the confidence of grace, that nothing could be denied them. Hence the curious scenes of lust and violence enacted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the name of religion; nearer to our own time, the doctrines of Mormonism show the same tendency.

So far, then, as morality is not earthly it is at the same time anti-social. The taboos are imposed, not for human ends, so far, at least, as human life on earth goes. For that reason they are not useful, though it should be mentioned that one taboo, which forbids the marriage of brother and sister, has been found so useful that it is never likely to be broken. To observe them

must be an eternal nuisance, but it is by observing them that man hopes to maintain inviolate that moral nature by which he sets such store, and to keep himself and his community—for the two things cannot be separated—in intimate relation with the god.

But the more modern moral systems, while preserving a considerable element of the taboo, exhibit an increasing tendency to explain themselves on the ground that they have a social and earthly mission. One hears of such things as the moral progress of man, or the idea that social harmony is only to be reached through moral ideals. While retaining a grasp of heaven they insist that on earth, too, they have a place, that, in fact, they are supreme in both spheres. Though it involves to a certain extent a recapitulation of arguments already set forth, this matter had better be reserved for the next section.

SECTION 3. MORALITY AS HUMANISM

THE mission of Jesus, so far as it can be disengaged from the predilections of his biographers, seems to have been directed against the taboos, and the formalism which is their necessary consequence. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican will be remembered. Yet the Pharisee, in enumerating the taboos he had observed and in arguing therefrom that he was a just man, was correct according to his lights. Many Pharisees, the strict formalists of the Hebrews, must have argued in precisely this way without any sense of hypocrisy. The Hebrews, however, were never at any period of their written records followers of the taboo pure and simple.

Sandwiched among the taboos of Leviticus (in chapter 19, for example) one finds the most enlightened precepts. There was support, therefore, for Jesus with his aphorisms about the lightness of his yoke, about the Sabbath being made for man and not man for the Sabbath, about God as the object of love and not fear, and the brotherhood of man. So far as our society is concerned, to him must be attributed the new turn given to morality, making it the instrument whereby life might be shorn of some of its cruelty. With an originality striking in his own time and circumstances he seized upon a salient characteristic of human nature, the mutual give and take whereby men live in harmony. By an arrangement with his master's debtors the unjust steward contrives that in the event of his dismissal he shall fall upon his feet. 'Make to yourselves therefore friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.' Which is as much as to say that there is more in humanity than the taboo or the god of taboos allows for.

It is needless to point out that, whatever the teachings of Jesus, in the religion that was founded upon him the taboos were to a considerable extent restored. Tithes and sabbaths, priests and ceremonies were all established by the time the Church is historically recognizable. None the less, to whatever extent these were retained, the new orientation, that which gave the movement its driving power, was the constant endeavour to use and to cultivate human charity as the basis of society. This has been from time to time repugnant to the taboo element, which prefers coercion and exclusion, election and condemnation, and would rather blind obedience than honest dissent. It has, however, lost and is losing

its battles, while Christianity is steadily recovering more and more its first humanitarian tinge.

The question which rises is—Is this the true meaning of morality, and what, if so, are its relations to the earlier and more arrogant form?

The main objection is the impossibility of distinguishing morality in this sense from ordinary prudence. The general principle of humanist morality is 'Use your neighbour as yourself'. But there is no need of morality to formulate this principle; it is equally patent to common sense. There are, and there always have been, circles, however narrow, within which man has regarded his neighbour on terms of mutual equality. Even despots have their friends. It needs a stretch of thought to realize that the wider the circle the better for everybody, and that those men are most truly themselves who are capable of being friends with all the world; but this is only an extension of the principle involved in having any friends at all. The world as we know it is not one in which brotherhood does not exist. It exists, but it is limited to classes, to spheres of common interest: it is checked by differences of upbringing and outlook, by lack of equal opportunity, by suspicions of exploitation. Formidable difficulties enough, but no justification for assuming that the social system is based on enmity and requires a new principle to turn it into friendship.

The truth is that love is a far more natural element in man than hate. You hate your neighbour only when you find you cannot love him; you love as a general rule, and you hate as a particular instance. It has already been pointed out that there is a natural clanship between members of the same species. The same thing holds true of classes as well as individuals. No class

exploits another out of malice prepense; where such things happen, it is due to sheer muddleheadedness, inability to comprehend that the course is detrimental to their own interests, and, in many cases, a belief that the state of affairs complained of was ordained by a god and is therefore unalterable. To this must be added a natural asperity at being blamed for what they are not responsible, and a very real and proper fear that unless reconstruction is conducted with care not they only, but the whole community, will lose the benefits which they are censured for enjoying. The idea that you are to lose merely in order that some one else may gain is naturally as unacceptable in politics as in business: hence it is clear that the first step in reform must be to cultivate such intelligence as will enable all parties to agree upon what is necessary.

The principle of social organization is, the better the individual the better the state. A bad army costs no less than a good army, a bad education than a good education. The difference lies in the quality of the individuals, and this is controlled by the extent and efficiency of their training. It is plain, therefore, that, merely in order to get the best out of his own life, a man is logically driven to see to it that his fellows get the best out of theirs, since the two things hang upon one another. It is accordingly possible to conceive of a state conducted on principles of enlightened selfishness which should be equal to a moral state in all respects, though the word morality was unknown to it.

In other words, there is no difference ultimately between selfishness and altruism, inasmuch as a proper regard for one's own interest is a proper regard for the interests of others. Such selfishness as we know is based

either on ignorance or despair; either public intelligence is so low that it cannot see its own interest, or else, despairing of any remedy, it takes what it can get without regard for the consequences.

The brotherhood of man is thus a condition inseparable from the others upon which man lives his life upon earth—certainly so far as he elects to live it by thought. This amounts to saying that kindliness and good nature are natural qualities. Thought may expand and develop them, but only to the extent of making explicit what they already contain. And it is thought which works this change by the processes native to it.

It might perhaps be argued that the distinction between morality and prudence is just a mistake, that morality is nothing but thought on social questions pushed to its most logical conclusions. On such showing man is a moral to the extent that he is a thinking creature.

This is, however, to deny, or at least to ignore, the essential feature of morality, the moral conviction with its implication of duty. There is no certainty about thought which is not provisional, at least as regards human affairs. It has no convictions about right or wrong; its attitude is tentative. If such and such enactments are made, and such and such conduct prescribed, what will the consequences be? Will they further or retard the ideals I have for the individual or the community? It remains to try and see.

These are the methods of law and custom, but can they be those of morality? What becomes of the idea of duty? If I conform, it is under no sense of duty; I conform either because I see it is to my advantage or because I am compelled from without. I conform,

not because it is good, but because it is useful or expedient.

But, it may be said, the brotherhood of man remains a moral conviction. This is true; and the reason is that all moral beings must necessarily be regarded as equal. It is clear that if this idea, which is comparatively simple, could be comprehended by all as forming an essential part of their moral convictions, the way of thought, which pursues the same end, would be made much easier. Moral conviction would in this way co-operate with and reinforce thought. But the work of instituting the brotherhood of man would be left to thought; thought alone could devise that system of checks and balances which would be necessary for the practical realization of this ideal. In doing so it would be perfectly legitimate for thought to coerce this individual and that and limit his freedom, but that one moral being should coerce another is simply unthinkable, as it stands to reason that one moral being cannot be subject to another. Inasmuch, therefore, as thought applied to social institutions implies coercion, or at least limitation, it is not moral, and man as subject to the conditions of thought is not moral either.

No one can deny that if he is morally convinced about something he desires to impart his conviction to his neighbours; moreover, that if he is unable to arouse a similar conviction by force of argument he is sorely tempted to do so by compulsion. The force, that is, of his moral conviction overrides its logical implication, namely, that if his neighbours, like himself, are moral beings they are not to be coerced, and if they are not moral it is no use expecting them to have moral convictions. Individuals can be coerced only so far as they are not moral. There is no means by which a moral conviction

can be imparted ; if the conviction is shared, it is because each person has evolved it out of his own moral nature. The practical consequence is that the more one is convinced of morality the more must one avoid suspicion of domineering or arrogance, or attempting to interfere, on moral grounds, with the personality of others ; for nothing will so fatally hinder the arising in them of a similar conviction. The odium of compulsion must be left to non-moral forces, and the moral ideal of the brotherhood of man is best attained by remaining what it is and can only be—something between an idea and an emotion, something so good that it must not be spoiled by forcing it into earthly standards. Those men who have done most to make this aspect of morality apparent to mankind have been those who showed the greatest indifference to human imperfections, or to human conceptions of right and wrong. Confident in the power which upheld them, they have not troubled to quarrel about names and things. The window, as it were, was opened to them that they might look out, not that light might be thrown on the defects of the room they occupied. Because they have not regarded the faults of their neighbours they have taught that faults were not worthy of notice. They have been the best example because they have not wished to be.

SECTION 4. DUTY

SOME implications of duty have already been treated. A general view of the subject should serve to bring them out more clearly. It has to be noted that not all we call duty is really duty in the moral sense. Such a phrase

as 'The duties attached to the office consist in &c., &c.' does not refer to moral duties, and we tend to be mistaken even in such duties as we conceive to be moral.

The idea of duty must first be detached from the concrete act in which we try to embody it. Odd though it may seem, that surge of feeling, that sense of absolute worth which is present at moments of moral inspiration, does not necessarily indicate a corresponding action. If we watch the death agony of some dumb creature, if the chance of the moment reveals to us all of a sudden the remorseless cruelty underlying the operations of nature, we have a sense of blind longing, of impotence which often turns to rage because there is nothing we can do, no act by which we can vindicate our conscience. Those also who have accustomed themselves to dissociate their moral feelings from any set of actions find these feelings working strongly in contemplative moments when nothing is further from the mind than action. Stray thoughts or perceptions, the view of a sunset or a starlit sky, a moment in which our apprehension as it were grasps in a breath the scope and purport of the universe—at such times more than at any other do we feel the positive working of the moral consciousness; yet there is neither the desire nor the possibility for action. Similar emotions run through crowds in times of tension: it is recorded that at the coronation of Lewis the Sixteenth of France the whole congregation burst into tears. Such emotion is not to be defined; it is not joy or sorrow, hope or despair, doubt or resolution. We can trace all these things in it, because such passions are part of the fabric of humanity. But it is more than these; it is the moral consciousness purged of humanity, active or passive.

In fact, it loses its special quality when it is tamed by

being tied down to a set of duties. Nothing on earth is so tedious as moral codes, tables of actions good, bad, and indifferent. And the reason is not far to seek. These codes are nothing but the bare skeleton of the impulse which gave them birth. However estimable their author, he is unable to impart to maxims, which of necessity must be generalized for the use of all, the first flush of the particular instance on which they rest. More than this, and more important, all that he has to depend on for the translation of his raptures is his intelligence, and though we respect his moral nature it does not follow that we can respect this.

Of its nature, the moral consciousness, whether a man regards it as continuous or intermittent, must inevitably centre round his own life which is, as has been seen, in the last resort unique and incommunicable. To reduce what is new or original to words demands in any case talent of no mean order, and when it is not a matter of description merely, but of legislation, it is a task for which very few have the powers. Thus it comes about that, though all men have moral feelings, it has fallen to few so to express them as to command the attention or the obedience of others. The question what act corresponds to any given moral ideal is one that is, contrary to common prejudice, immensely difficult. All that a man has to go upon is the fact that in certain circumstances he made a moral valuation. But at what point precisely in this complex did morality enter? If he is a philosopher with a long tradition of learning behind him he may be able to analyse the implications; but if he is a savage, or unlettered, or an opinionated crank, his interpretation is bound to show the marks of his character and condition. He cannot do more than ordain what seems to

him good. For this reason the taboo is a truly moral ordinance. Even though it conflicts with principles which more enlightened speculation sees to be essential to morality, it was made in all good faith. But for the reasons for which we refuse to conform to the taboo we can also refuse to conform to precepts later in date, yet, because of the ignorance or prejudice which they contain, not essentially different from the taboo.

Can we conceive of a moral code which shall satisfy moral principles and command the approval, and so the obedience, of all persons? This is the question to which this book attempts an answer, and so only those points bearing directly on duty can be considered here. The answer seems to be 'No', simply because qualities which we cannot help regarding as moral conflict one with another. Such qualities as pity, sympathy, humanity, strike us as moral: on the other hand, there is a hardness, a singlemindedness of purpose unsparing of itself or others, an austerity and reclusion of spirit which seems not less moral. Can life ever be so constituted that these two opposites will never come into conflict? There is no need to multiply instances; scarcely a quality in man but has, in certain conditions, a moral value, and it is according as the conditions vary that its value varies. The consequence is that no code could satisfy all conditions; the best one could do would be to seek a 'mean', and this implies that in place of a universal morality would be set up a personal morality.

Personal morality, again, would depend on personal intelligence, a varying factor. But even supposing this to be made perfect, so that a man's act in any situation will be the best possible, what then? True, some stumbling-blocks would be removed—that considerable part

of current morality, for example, which is nothing but pure egoism. The idea of duty has too frequently involved the idea of a self which is a beneficiary of all the moral actions undertaken. A man refrains from a certain course because it would be derogatory to his higher self; on the lips of such a one there may be—rather inconsistently—the phrase 'self-sacrifice'. Translated into acts this means that he gets up early or does not get drunk because his higher self would be degraded otherwise; at the same time he describes such prudence as self-sacrifice. But this, if self-sacrifice, means that the real self is the one which would like to get drunk; had he wished to sacrifice his moral self he should have got drunk. As he did not, his act was not self-sacrifice but self-aggrandizement. The instance is brutal, but the same argument applies even when the noblest renunciations are made, if they are made to preserve inviolate a higher self.

Such egoism would be swept away by clearer knowledge. Yet, even so, would the individual be better able to satisfy his moral aspirations? Would he not rather see, more and more clearly, the absolute inadequacy of any human act or intention to express them? The smaller the mind the better it is content to approximate, to do a thing here and a thing there; falling short and inconsistency do not worry because they are not noticed. But they do not escape the more comprehensive mind. Do its duty in details as well as it may, it cannot fail to see that taken in sum the round of human life bears no resemblance at all to that of a moral being. The truer the conception of morality, the less the hope of encompassing it: from this point it is but a short step to seeing that the moral consciousness does not depend on or

imply acts, that acts, in fact, conceal rather than reveal it. Self-sacrifice, for example, that most tempting of ideals, has no meaning when it is a surrender upon terms, a matter of discarding the less in order to retain the greater. The only self-sacrifice known to morality is absolute, the throwing away of all to get nothing, not even the soul's content or salvation. Only one act of this kind is possible to man—the laying down of his life. For in so doing he sacrifices not his life merely but the possibility of knowing that he has made the sacrifice. He has made no bargain because he has thrown into the bargain even his power of making it. His conscience is not satisfied until he has lost his life, and when he has lost it there is no conscience to be satisfied. Surely, then, an act of this kind so far from being an assertion of the moral value of the world is, on the contrary, a repudiation? Life and morality are incompatible, because so long as one bargains about one's life one cannot meet the terms of morality. If morality is worth everything, then life is worth nothing.

Those who would argue that life has a moral value from the willingness of a man to lay down his life should bear these points in mind. What such sacrifice discloses is, not the morality of life, but the willingness to sacrifice even life to morality. If life were moral one could not wish to give it up. What can be given up in the name of morality is morally worthless. This does not mean that, for those who survive, the man who lays down his life for his fellows will not be the supreme example. It is the best we can do. But the supreme tribute to morality is also the supreme condemnation of life.

It follows from this that the conception of duty must grow more and more negative. Man will cease to fit life

into a framework of duty, and will fall back on the consciousness that what he has regarded as the truest and noblest conceptions of duty are just those the fulfilment of which the keenest powers of thought would prescribe. He will confidently expect also that as thought develops so will there cease even to be a passing necessity for the conception of duty. Too much of it always has been compulsion in disguise ; it has never been a purely moral quality. When human kind does its best of its own choice there will be no need of compulsion, real or feigned.

SECTION 5. FREE WILL

IT had better, perhaps, be mentioned that the foregoing difficulties arise out of the attempt to do justice to morality, not to belittle it. If the analysis upsets cherished convictions, it is anyhow better that they should suffer rather than morality. Nor, again, because these convictions go the way of all flesh is there any reason to suppose that morality dies with them. The idea is absurd. Morality is the one thing man will never discard : if he changes his moral opinions he does so in order to amplify, not to diminish, his morality.

He cannot stop, he cannot even wish to stop making moral valuations. To come to value something less means that he has come to value something else more. Not even the doubt whether life as a whole can be made to satisfy moral aspiration could prevent him seeking always and everywhere approximations to his ideal. The subtler his intellectual conception of morality the wider the field in which he may look for these approximations. He will, in short, see good where he did not

see it before; unable to get the substance he will be content with the shadow. It may not be logical, but it is human. We take life as we find it because we cannot help ourselves: what is more, making the best of things is obviously a moral quality. It is not the part of a moral being to lament his fate.

The great change will lie in the decline, if not the disappearance, of didactic morality. It does no one any harm to see good in everything; this is a matter in which exaggeration is no vice. The danger is in the nose for evil. As shortcomings are inevitable it is no part of morality to smell them out, and upon such courses hang all the dangers which undermine the community. Suspicion, mistrust, antagonisms, backbiting, scandal, retaliations—all such things come from the attempt to convince one's neighbour of sin and to visit it upon him. Nothing is more degrading than the petty revenges taken by petty minds for petty infringements of petty codes. It cannot be too often repeated that nothing can rouse a man's resentment more than the assumption by another of moral superiority over him. All are willing to confess to falling short of the ideal, but it is no one's business to draw up a class-list of incompetence.

Moral lessons or examples are also proving too much for human forbearance; it is to be doubted, in fact, whether they were ever accepted without much inner resentment. Dislike of other folk's preaching is a mark of idealism, not of indifference; but we would rather not have our secret fancies associated with the stuffiness and the platitudes of the lecture-room. That which all can understand is usually that which is not worth hearing. Those who—pardonably enough—find their convictions so strong that they must have an audience, should preach,

like St. Francis, to the birds, or to such creatures as would lend a polite but undiscriminating attention.

We can tolerate our own stupidity, but not other people's. What is the underlying reason? Why is it that the more important the matter the less is it possible to arouse a collective enthusiasm? We can lose our heads over sport, we like to hear opinions on art or archaeology; but the more we cherish our moral enthusiasms the more jealously we guard them.

The truth is that such surface ripples are a sign of a difficulty which all feel but which not all are able to justify. Human fallibility is great, and it is doubted whether it could ever stand so securely as to be able to preach to others. But the odd and interesting thing is that only when it professes to advise in moral matters is human fallibility resented. In affairs it is expected and condoned; you take advice, and you are not surprised if that advice fails. It is in the nature of things that certainty should be approximate only.

And, of course, a man's moral judgements are as fallible as any other part of him. But it is not their fallibility that we resent, or only partly; it is the inner conviction that moral judgements ought not to be fallible. In being deprived of certainty in such matters we have the sense of being cheated or played with. And a man who preaches comes in for some of this odium.

The good, we feel, should be universal; and yet when we look for it we cannot find it, and are perpetually fobbed off with travesties. What is the philosophic import of this feeling of ours?

Put briefly, it is that of necessity the moral nature demands free will, and this man cannot exercise.

When I act, I am limited both as to what I can

conceive and as to what I can accomplish. I cannot do all that I imagine, and I cannot imagine all that I do. Though I live I cannot imagine what life is. I do what horses and dogs cannot; but horses can live on grass, which I cannot, and dogs can run faster than I.

It is plain that each species has its own insuperable limitations. But—to leave particular instances and come to principles—is it not equally plain that the whole mechanism of life which was discussed in the last book, the circuit of action upon desire, of execution upon conception, is a mark of limitation? A want means that something is wanting; there is a gulf between what you are and what you would be. Necessarily, what you want is something which at the moment of wanting you are not.

To apply this to morals: the desire to be good is an indication that you are not good, that the state of man is not a moral state. Your ideals are what you would be and are not. Similarly, the fact that you have an option whether you will do your duty or not is a sign of moral shortcoming. You are not wholly good, or the alternative between duty and not-duty could not exist for you.

It is very commonly said that though man's having a choice whether or not to do his duty is a sign that he is not completely moral, yet he shows his morality by doing his duty in the face of temptation. The argument has a rough truth, but the suggestion which it conveys, that duty is what is unpleasant, is open to the same objections as the opposite argument to the effect that duty is what (in spite of appearances) most pleases. Either may be refuted in a sentence; if a man's duty is unpleasant, he is not moral; if it is pleasant, it is not a duty. The fact is that no man ever failed to distinguish, according to his lights, between his duty and his

pleasure, and neither pleasure nor pain ever prevented him from performing a duty of which he was morally convinced. Moral fervour is not a light thing; where it exists, it is the supreme passion. Hesitation arises only from lack of conviction or from a conflict of duties, a conflict which itself reveals that morality and duty are not one. But the argument serves to point the common confusion between the moral consciousness and the intellectual effort which tries to give it form. A specific duty is the product of that effort. It is limited by our capacities, and is therefore not a pure test of moral worth, even though it may be the best we can do.

But the argument reappears in this form—granted that talents are a matter of fortune, morality consists in the use made of them. The same answer suffices. A distinction between talents and their use may be all very well for common speech, but the failure to use them means no more than that the desire to use them is wanting. For this how can we assign moral censure? By sundry methods of stimulation, as the whip is applied to the horse, we may persuade a man to do what we conceive to be his share; but it is not his fault that he should require extra stimulation any more than it is his merit that he should act without.

In fact, when action implies choice it is not free. Man is bound because he is bound to choose; he cannot avoid doing so, and the alternatives offered him are only within a limited sense of his own making. If we are free only within limits we are good only within limits; as our responsibility is not absolute we can take no credit for whatever good our acts may appear to contain.

The mere analysis of what is contained in the idea of moral being or perfection shows that man has no claims

to this nature. The perfect nature must be perfect throughout, that is, each manifestation of its activity must be equally perfect. Such a being has not to adjust its activity to some standard outside itself, to something, that is, more perfect than itself. It knows, therefore, of no distinction between what is right and what is not right. It is perfect in its own nature. Its activity is good because it is good; it is good because its activity is good; the two things are one. Clearly it has no faculty of choice, for it knows nothing of a possible difference between what it is and what it may be. Being unlimited it is free; being free it is good.

Such a being, conforming to no necessity but the necessity of its own nature which is perfection, could not be a being compelled to live, like ourselves, under temporal conditions. Moral perfection is foreign to us except as an intellectual idea, because it is incompatible with the necessary conditions of human existence. Any given moment of our lives is incomplete, but a stage to something else. Life cannot be moral because all its conditions—including, of course, the condition of being alive at all—are not within our control. Having responsibility neither for the components of our own being nor for the surroundings in which that being is worked out, we have not free will. If we try, therefore, to translate the moral consciousness into thought we can only do so negatively, saying that its realization demands conditions of which we have and can have no experience. The moral being must be timeless, because it is complete; spaceless, because it is its own world. In short, it is what we are not.

Hence our moral consciousness cannot be measured either by the thoughts or the actions which accompany it simply because these are the product of the human

consciousness which is limited, whereas the other must not be. Duty, therefore, can only be regarded as the sign of the moral consciousness in so far as it is a bare idea, unique and—for purposes of action in this world—unnecessary. In order to become a motive for action duty has to be translated into terms of thought and desire; it thus falls into line with all other forms of activity, and in so doing loses its specific quality. That is, a consciousness of obligation in general—the state of a moral being—cannot be translated adequately into the consciousness of this or that obligation, the state of human being. We mean well, but we cannot, really, do well.

SECTION 6. THE MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS

THE moral consciousness is the standpoint of a moral being, and the standpoint of all moral beings must be the same. But for life, as was indicated in the last book, there is no universal standard of value. Each man values his own life, but for different reasons, those reasons being expressed by what he feels he wants to do with it. In short, while living means valuing, there is only superficial agreement as to the values. The value which the individual places upon it is as peculiar as his character, the two things being really the same. He wants to be what he is and he is what he wants to be.

So far, therefore, as we are merely living creatures we must value life as worth while. Animals or babies do not, to all appearance, make any attempt to get outside life and estimate it against some external standard; nor for the most part do we. We value it because we cannot help it; disappointments, no less than joys, are proof of interest. So in order to value life as a whole

it is necessary that we should take up some standpoint other than life itself. And this is what, as moral beings, we do attempt. Thus the standpoints of life and of morality are not the same: moreover, they are not only different but opposite.

Without a moral consciousness the standards of life would be unquestioned, and perfect because unquestioned. But man being a creature with a history, it does not follow that the full philosophical implications of the dual standard are recognized from the moment in which they come into operation. All he is necessarily aware of is two standards, by one of which he contrives his goodness and by the other his pleasures. He uses these indiscriminately, for he is unaware of any fundamental opposition between them. The standard of goodness has the pre-eminence, and so far as life may be conceivably ordered by it it is so ordered. But the word 'conceivably' holds the root of the problem. The moral consciousness in itself gives no indication of the way in which it is to be applied to life. In itself it is nothing but a bare conviction, a sense of supreme value, that feeling which makes *ought* the unique experience. I ought; but what ought I? The question can only be answered by thinking, and what man thinks now is not what he thought two thousand or five thousand years ago. What the Semite thinks is not what the Aryan thinks; what the savage knows is not what I know.

Each man, each tribe, each community fumbles at its own answer. All are ridden by this mastering conviction that perfection can be attained, but the manner of attainment is as diverse as the capacity of man. But whatever the form of his development, we find him distinguishing between what he does to secure practical results and what he does to preserve or enlarge his virtue. It is unfortu-

nate that any of the words in which we can describe a feeling of moral worth are such as suggest a considerable degree of reflective power. We attach meanings to such words as sanctity, virtue, perfection, and so forth, of which the savage is incapable. Yet as the feeling of moral worth is not contingent on the powers of reflection the savage possesses it in some form or other. He has codes of morality, and codes so bereft of all reasonableness that it is impossible to regard them as based on utility. From the first, that is, morality is the opponent, and usually the enemy, of common sense. Nor is this surprising so long as it is believed that goodness is a state which can be achieved positively.

The why and wherefore of the moral consciousness must be examined later; for the present its effects only need be traced. We are to imagine a something which gives the individual, however vague his intelligence, a curious and unnerving sense of his own personal worth. In the child it appears as a kind of diffidence—in striking contrast to the young of other species—a remarkable power of absorbing moral ideas even of the silliest description, a hesitation about satisfying its curiosity on the most normal things as though by doing so it would put itself at some disadvantage.

This feeling is intensified on the verge of maturity: self-consciousness becomes a burden, so as even to paralyse activity. The impulse to give it some sort of investiture becomes irresistible. Boys, unconsciously imitating their ancestors, form secret societies, in which the feeling of confederation amplifies and soothes the sense of self-importance, for this and the sense of mystery are closely allied. Anybody who shares a secret feels important, and the point is, not the secret, but the fact that it is shared. An amusing example is seen in those communities

where ceremonial use is made of the bull-roarer, that flat piece of wood whirled round on the end of a string so as to make a buzzing noise. Only the men use it; the women and children regard it as the voice of the god. It is clear that the boys, when they are in turn initiated, cannot learn the secret without discovering the hoax. Yet not in all these thousands of years has it been betrayed. It is kept as it were for the fun of the thing, and the young men go about the bush frightening the women, who must scurry away so soon as the mystical sound is heard.

Secrets, ceremonies, mysteries, all have the same purpose. They enhance the sense of personal worth. Intimately blended therewith are the various speculations which a man, according to the measure of his ignorance, has about the causes of things. Inasmuch as the first notion in this direction is that of powerful spirits it is not surprising that he conceives of them as standing in relation to himself, or that he argues that by doing what pleases them he will not only get what he wants but will secure his personal importance. But the question arises—what are the things which please? Here he is driven back on his intelligence. A course of action once turned out successfully; what was the feature in it which so pleased the spirits that they brought it to this issue? As he does not know, his best procedure is to repeat the whole of his actions on any subsequent occasion. So it comes about that if on setting out upon a foray which was prosperous the chief fell at a point, the whole tribe must fall at that point at all times thereafter. Add to this that all those who in the eyes of the tribe have a special insight into the ways of the spirits are continually hatching devices by which their favour

may be retained, and it is easy to see the whole system of taboos in the making.

With increasing knowledge come endeavours to give the moral consciousness newer and wider forms. It is not so exclusive, so arrogant, so jealous. Man tries to give shape to the idea of the necessary equality of all moral beings. This, however, comes at first, not at the expense of, but in addition to the earlier system; it is still believed that personal or communal prosperity is secured by keeping the favour of a deity who would rather be propitiated than analysed. Man is not yet certain that by his own intellect he can assign what is necessary and what is not to goodness. But tentative steps are made this way; he tames his god in proportion as he tames himself; he is not unwilling to point to the earthly benefits of morality as a reason for adopting it. The idea, indeed, may arise that by morality alone are the human virtues created and cultivated, and it is not at first observed that the seeming rational cogency weakens the moral cogency. More and more are people encouraged to make their own interpretations; the way is open for doubts and questions, and the former submissive consent to the oracles of prophets and priests disappears.

Out of such dissensions and the enlargement of view consequent thereon arises a third stage. The fundamental conditions of morality are examined, and it is seen that the acts committed under the sense of obligation are really irrelevant to the obligation itself. It is seen that neither in himself has man the requisite perfection to contemplate moral action, nor, on the other hand, does the world offer any scope for such activity. The greater part of the motions of life, such things as sleeping, walking,

eating, are not capable of taking any moral colour; where this is not the case, an act and its direct contrary may be equally moral in differing circumstances. Yet, setting aside both man's feebleness and the world's inadequacy, the moral consciousness remains unaffected; and, once isolated, it is seen in its real import.

The moral consciousness is remarkable not for what it enjoins but for what it claims. Its possessor, in fact, claims to be a moral being, claims those attributes which the analysis of a few pages back showed to be involved: free will and perfection, an absolute identity between being and doing. These attributes are the contrary of those principles under which he lives his life, in which imperfection and limitation are the necessary conditions.

What is the result of the clash of the two opposites? The moral consciousness is supreme but impotent; life is worthless but not to be denied. Out of these is born the sense of obligation, the 'ought'. Man is faced with conditions, which, morally, are valueless, and the impulse which condemns them is also the impulse which would change them: *what is ought not to be*, that is the ultimate form of the moral consciousness. The condemnation, though morally right, is practically ineffective, for the judgement which says—negatively—'This ought not to be' cannot be turned into 'This ought to be so-and-so'. What is non-moral to begin with is non-moral to the end.

The error, therefore, consists in trying to give a positive form to what is essentially negative. A moral being would not, in fact, have a sense of obligation, because he would not exist in a world which was not the product of his own moral perfection. That our moral consciousness should take the shape of an *ought* is sufficient proof that

it exists as a consciousness merely, a bare conviction, and not as an effective instrument.

It follows from this that the moral consciousness is not made or destroyed by any act. Disappointing as this may be to a few, it is in fact the most promising feature; for it becomes possible to consider its implications without the irrelevant and often repellent accessories with which the endeavour to translate it into a code has invested it. These matters will be treated in the next section.

SECTION 7.
THE POTENTIALITIES OF REASON

THE term moral consciousness has been used partly because it is familiar, partly because it expresses in the vaguest possible way something which is perfectly unmistakable to all who have experienced it. It remains to see how far it is capable of completer definition.

To the extent that it is consciousness it is not, of course, peculiar, and this is not the distinguishing factor. Consciousness is the normal feature of our existence, and is that compound of intellect and emotion, of knowledge and feeling, which is at once the guide and the mirror of our personality. It is a variable element, changed by the conditions of the hour: the speech we rehearsed so carefully in private may be forgotten through nervousness under the public eye. It is essentially related to our activity, and for that reason cannot be fully known. In other words, we control our consciousness—but our consciousness also controls us. Of the two conceptions which the mind can form, that of controlling events and

that of being controlled by them, neither completely fits ; sometimes the one, sometimes the other, is more apposite.

It is hardly necessary to add that the march of knowledge is bound to throw more light on this contrariety ; at present we must content ourselves with formulating the problem so far as our ignorance permits. And the problem is how to account for the appearance in consciousness of a moral factor which is at once unnecessary and ineffective, a factor which, if it is not to be regarded as a silly and pointless illusion, demands for its fulfilment conditions which life is unable to supply.

The answer would seem to be found in the consideration of the part played by reason in human activity. The truism that by reason man adjusts means to ends must be scrutinized for the sake of a clearer understanding of the issues involved.

It has been observed already that thought is not as a rule carried further than is necessary in order to secure practical results in the matter in hand. If you wish to cross a stream you consider how to build a bridge : you do not sit down and ponder on the nature of water, or the real essence of wood or stone, or why—seeing that life is short—you should be bothered with building a bridge at all.

This is equally true of all scientific work also, though this is commonly regarded as the quest for pure knowledge. Research begins with some definite problem ; a substance is taken and examined for its behaviour under specified conditions. The first object is to see what happens ; the next to understand, if possible, why it happens. The fact that these inquiries may cover a considerable space of time, and that in the course of them it may be necessary very largely to modify the first opinions

one had, makes no difference. The inquiry was undertaken to secure practical results, and so long as it continues to give results nothing else matters. Thus you may build a bridge by throwing logs across the stream, or you may build it by making use of the most accurate calculations of the behaviour under strain of the materials employed; the one course demands little thought, the other a great deal; in the one there is no practical experiment save that of putting the log in place, in the other use is made of many experiments which were conducted, in all likelihood, without any idea that they would be applied to bridge-building. But in either case all that is demanded of thought is that it shall accomplish what is wanted.

In short, in the business of life there is a point at which inquiry stops. At the same time it is quite possible to make thought itself the subject of thought, to examine, not this or that definite problem, but thought's own nature, its principles and its possibilities. It is true that such an inquiry, if successful, would be of the highest practical importance; it is true, even, that such progress as has been made is extremely valuable in giving some understanding of the machinery of thinking: the inquiry, therefore, is essentially similar to any other. But as life goes on indifferent to whether the inquiry is successful or even undertaken, and as practical results do not here, as elsewhere, form an arbitrary limit to investigation, it is not improperly regarded as pure, in contrast to practical, speculation.

Such, then, is the province of philosophy, the endeavour to state what is known, what can be known, and how it is known. It tries to comprehend the principles of thinking as distinct from its applications. Whether I think of water or of H_2O, I am thinking; what principle is common

to those two acts of thought, or to any other? Or, to put it more generally still, why is it that some answers satisfy reason, when others do not?

Of all the issues so raised only one is of present moment. It would commonly be said that what is reasonable is what is consistent, that consistency is the principle of reason: it follows that if we understand what we mean by the former we shall know something of the latter.

It is plain that the word consistent is capable of as various interpretations as the word same. A man would be called inconsistent whose tale—whatever it was—should involve a thing being in two places at once; or who should do one thing and say another. Such things are contrary to received notions of what is possible.

But there is also a consistency which is attained by what amounts to inconsistency. The law, for example, decides particular cases by general principles, whether derived from statute or tradition. Often such principles cannot be made wholly to apply, with the result that what in the case of an individual is a manifest injustice is committed. But the law argues, rightly, that it is best to preserve principles at the risk of injustice in a detail.

There is yet a third type of consistency which is correct as regards details but wrong as a comprehensive view. We speak of sunrise and sunset, but the conception will not do for astronomy. We talk of a body falling to earth, omitting all reference to the earth's falling to the body; to do so would be pedantic in ordinary circumstances.

The truth, therefore, or consistency of a thing or a theory is relative. Things are as consistent as circumstances permit, not as far as the ideal of consistency permits. We cannot, in fact, be as consistent as our reason would like, because, for one thing, if we sus-

pended all action (presuming that were possible) until we had investigated the limits of reason our task would never be finished; and for another, it is our very way of proceeding from compromise to compromise, our habit of assuming something until experience discloses its inconsistency, that is the greatest stimulation to thought. The less we do the less we think.

Hence we must regard the ideal of consistency as very different from its applications. Truth as an abstraction is something very different from this or that concrete truth. Reason is one thing and reasoning another: if we wish to know what it means we must not take a concrete example but analyse its implications.

The first necessity of reason is that it should be one, and one only. There cannot be several kinds of truth. It must be self-standing and complete, for if it were not complete it would depend upon something outside itself, something, that is, which would be more true than itself. Finally, every part would be rationally connected with every other part; if a figure has three angles it follows that it has three sides. That is to say, it must be impossible to conceive of reason otherwise than it is.

Such are the conditions of reason, necessary because one cannot think otherwise without being unreasonable. And when they are stated in this way it is at once obvious that no experience of which we are capable could possibly fulfil those conditions. What we call space and time are a permanent obstruction, for neither of them can give completeness as neither of them can be exhausted.

In short, the relative truth with which we are familiar is obtained by applying so far as may be a standard of consistency which is impossible of complete realization and overlooking where it breaks down. We say the sun

rises and sets till experience shows that to be impossible ; there are blind spots in our present astronomical theories which are bound to be troublesome sooner or later. (Gravity is, of course, a clear instance in point.) We assume the indestructibility of elements until experience suggests the contrary. Then we patch up our theories afresh and start again.

Truth, in fact, comes to have a numerical value. That theory is more true which can explain more facts. Despairing of getting a true universal we substitute a numerical generalization. The universality of truth is not the number of those who believe it ; it is universal because it is reasonable, whether the number of reasonable beings is one or many. But in practice we do come to regard such a proposition as ' All men are mortal ' as proved by an arithmetical calculation. The electro-magnetic theory of light and heat owes a great part of its attractiveness to the fact that it sums up under one principle so many varieties ; and it is in this, not in its truth, that its virtue lies. Anybody who fancies he is nearer the heart of things because he interprets everything as a motion of negative particles of electricity must be praised for his enthusiasm rather than his intelligence.

It will be clear from the foregoing that there is a direct parallel between the limitations of reason as applied to life and the limitations of the moral consciousness so far as it would control activity. A reasonable world could not contain a distinction between the known and the unknown, a transition from ignorance to knowledge. The doctrine of limited consistency could not apply ; where all was altogether true there could not be degrees of truth. There would, in fact, be an identity between the world as it is and the world as it is known : knowledge

would not be knowledge *of* something which was not knowledge. The world would be reason and reason would be the world, that is to say, the world would be the product of a reasonable being's activity.

Clearly, therefore, the claims of reason are similar to the claims of morality. Both alike make freedom the first necessity, freedom meaning the absence of any limiting conditions, of a something *outside* themselves to which they must conform.

Both alike in their application to life have to convert the absolute universal of reason into the numerical universal of fact. The greatest truth is that which applies to the greatest number; similarly, those precepts are most moral which have the most general application. And in both cases the conversion vitiates their nature; a partial truth or a partial good is neither good nor true.

The answer, therefore, to the question how the moral consciousness arises appears to be that it is but an aspect and a consequence of reason. A reasonable being and a moral being are one and the same, and if a man reasons he is bound sooner or later to discover moral capacities. He is bound also to realize eventually that, situated as he is, all he can know of reason or morality is that they are *not* what he is, because both require a freedom or completeness which his life is unable to supply. In other words, the sign of reason in man is the negative judgement, 'This is not true' or 'This ought not to be'; in fine, 'This is not real'. The symbol of incompleteness is negation: for the reasonable being there could be no negative.

It cannot be said that the view that life and morality are not casually but fundamentally opposed is one that is as yet very generally held. Nor is this very surprising,

if one reflects that the natural interest excited by morality must tend the other way, and that, in any case, it is a field in which free speculation has not been encouraged. But the view is at least implied by the shifts and expediencies to which the sturdiest moralist has so often been driven in order to preserve for life the moral value which he so earnestly desires to see in it. Certainly it is true that the untutored mind, which has not come under the sway of tradition, does and must confess that, strive as it may to allay its suspicions, it despairs of constituting life upon a moral basis. Facts are too strong: from the first breath to the last life is in essence cruel. There is nothing that lives but lives on the life of something else; such things as disease and death, or even the mere struggle to exist, are insults to any conception we can form of moral dignity. The untutored mind, therefore, will not be surprised to find its secret feelings endorsed by reason. A moral being can, no doubt, bear suffering with fortitude: but the thing or being that forced this suffering upon him is not moral.

But the view forces certain issues which do not arise for the other side. What, for example, is likely to be the consequence of a general recognition by humanity at large that life cannot satisfy moral aspirations? In a way it is an idle speculation; yet not unimportant, for nothing is clearer than that the more the true meaning of morality is laid bare, the more it is stripped of its artificial appendages of taboo or spasmodic and too often narrow-minded altruism, the more absorbing is its grandeur. To those who have experienced it nothing else seems worth while; and it is beyond doubt that the experience is more general in our own time than in any other. Those who in all ages have instinctively rebelled at the silly codes

and pettifogging ceremonies prescribed in the name of this or that revelation have found that, after all, they and not their opponents were the true defenders of morality, and that this has no necessary connexion with a mean or nasty imagination. It is only when the arbitrary relation between morality and conduct has been severed that the audacious and inspiring claims which it provokes are fully realized, and man is not required in its name to choose between small rewards and niggling virtues, but can accept the terms on which life is given him secure in the knowledge that his moral being remains untouched thereby.

The proper effect of the moral consciousness should be, as might be expected, negative, not positive. It consists in a refusal to be upset by changes and chances, a refusal to erect a miserable effigy of morality in a place and with materials which are alike unworthy. It is not disfigured by that blind enthusiasm which is ready to suppress, destroy, or disable all opposition. No proof is needed that such an attitude maintained by all persons would result in the ordering of the world being handed over to common sense, and the abiding blemish on human history, whereby obvious and pressing reforms have not been undertaken because they conflicted with the moral opinions of some party, would be removed. Only those who have known it can understand the relief, the sense of enlightenment which comes of realizing that there is no moral impediment to the use of the natural powers to their fullest capacity.

Men will not plunge into riot and debauchery because of the lack of so-called moral restraints. It is, indeed, to be doubted whether any considerations of morality have ever influenced society as a whole in these matters;

common sense is enough to show that any form of disorderly living, whether it is drunkenness, or whether it is those much more dangerous social vices of cut-throat competition or class snobbery, is unprofitable in itself as well as deleterious to the community. Sometimes 'moral' precepts have harmonized with common sense, but as often they have concerned themselves excessively with sex, and have ignored where they have not supported the evils which are likely to rot society. Above all, moral codes, by deadening the sense of responsibility and reducing conduct to a sheep-like obedience to precept, deprive man of the quality most essential to right action: a subtler feeling for psychology permits it to be seen that man does his best when he has to stand by himself and make his decisions without those adventitious aids which are as likely to prejudice as assist his judgement. To realize that no precept is able to justify or excuse failure to consider the possible effect of one's action on others is better than to say, 'True, my act has injured the life or fortunes of So-and-so, but I acted in accordance with the best principles, or at least not against them'.

Thus the development of the negative attitude of the moral consciousness is likely to prove an immense stimulus. Men will be anxious to enjoy the unfettered use of their powers, and the knowledge that all problems can be referred to a sane tribunal and not lost in the dust of a conflict between moralists, none of whom know their own minds, will make for a temporary contentment. After all, though human records extend now over some thousands of years, never yet has the experiment been tried of solving all difficulties by thought and thought only; it is not likely that the muddles so created will be cleared away in any short space, or that so long as the

experiment can be continued there will be any falling away of interest. But the question arises—when the world is as good as it can conceivably be got, what then?

It is then that the peculiar claims of the moral consciousness will be likely to be most felt. Thought having become the dominant feature of man, it seems certain that the preposterous contradiction between his moral nature and the indignities to which it is subjected will stand in ever clearer light, while, at the same time, the intoxicating possibilities suggested by this nature will prove more and more attractive. To be free, perfect, unlimited, to be master of one's destiny, to be all and to know all—these are its incontrovertible claims. It is likely, therefore, that the more this is understood the less will life be desirable. In short, it seems probable that if the conditions of life cannot be altered man will prefer to become extinct.

The alternative is that the conditions of life be altered. As to this, one can offer only the barest speculations. But even our limited knowledge of man or nature is enough to show that changes occur in which what follows bears hardly any conceivable relation to what has gone before. Let alone that no organic life of the kind with which we are familiar can have existed while the earth was a molten ball, the notion that man of to-day is a lineal descendant of *homo primigenius* is one that we can accept only, and cannot understand. There seems to be no connexion between the two types, and the change from one to the other seems not a process but a change in kind. It is evident also that the various types of community indicate different sorts of mentality. The bee-state, with other forms of insect life, the

migratory and nest-building instincts of birds and other creatures, suggest powers of which we have but the foggiest representation. It is true that we would not judge any of these forms to be anything but limited: no more than ourselves do they enjoy free will. Yet the general conclusion is that there is no finality about the forms of life, and that a life which was based increasingly on reason might not improbably evolve a manner of existence consonant with the principles of reason, or perish in the attempt. It is plain that, however much the world as we know it must be condemned for its lack of reality, it must contain some element of reality if only that whereby we are enabled to condemn it. To realize that it is unreal is the first stage—and, so far as we ourselves are concerned, the last—towards expressing the real.

SECTION 8. THE SENSE OF HUMOUR

AN examination of the principles of life and morality results in the conclusion that the purpose of morality is not to control life. This is no doubt a strange conclusion to many; yet only so can those features which are morality's one claim to interest be vindicated. Those who look upon it merely as a convenient method of enforcing their prejudices without the necessity for demonstrating them may feel aggrieved; but, to speak frankly, the more you are interested in morality the less patience you have with this sort of perversion. To those who have spent any time in thinking out fundamentals, the fact that the moral judgement is an assertion of free will on the part of the individual judging is sufficient

compensation for the fact that, as a necessary consequence, it can have no active part in life. But for this, man's reason would force him to acknowledge that there was nothing in life but illusion. He would see himself as a phase of the universe, another phase. The implications of his own reason would mock him : at whatever they pointed, it would not be at him. Dissect them how you will, you do not find the idea of man involved in them. In reasoning, man makes no claims for himself: but in a moral judgement he claims everything. The moral judgement reveals another aspect of reason, an aspect which, however obscurely, includes man ; the assertion of freedom is the assertion of reality. In comparison with this it is a small matter that he cannot point to any specific part of him which is real ; he could not have done so in any case. The utmost he could say before was that nothing was real ; now he can say that he is real in spite of appearance. Through the moral judgement reason has a positive as well as a negative side.

Those, therefore, who wish to regard morality as a spring of terrestrial good conduct must understand that they do so at the cost of this quality. If it is merely a conduct-regulating mechanism, then it is as trivial and impermanent as any other human mechanism. If, on the other hand, it is desired to retain both its philosophic import and its operative influence on life, then there is no course but to demonstrate that, as living creatures, we are free and that the life we live is god-like.

To attempt so unprofitable a task will seem less necessary the more it is realized that life without moral standards will not be what is called a bad or immoral life. On the contrary, the inexorable pressure of common sense is increasingly imposing upon life what we have

been accustomed to call moral standards. If we leave out of account those abuses and shortcomings which the effects of history have imbedded in the social fabric, and consider merely the mental attitude of people to-day towards the problems of existence in comparison with the attitude of even fifty years ago, no one can doubt the immensely greater kindliness and toleration of the present time. Prejudice is less; self-control is greater; the impulse to coerce does not find itself so easy to justify. It is not fifty years ago that Queen Victoria wrote of the women who advocated female suffrage—a mild and unobtrusive body in those days—that they ought to be whipped. That is, a hard-working and high-principled lady saw nothing shocking in advocating such punishment for her own sex on account of a harmless doctrine. To-day, most of us are eager to accommodate; we are not so sure we are right, or that there is only one way of doing things. But this is not the consequence of greater morality; we hesitate to speak on this matter with the conviction of our fathers. It is due to greater enlightenment, greater common sense.

Needless to say, this elasticity of mind can be carried a good deal further. It would be a poor age that compared itself with the past and not with the future. The present comparison intends only to point out that the wider interest in thought, of which 'science' is but one aspect, has, already and in fact, had consequences which earlier would certainly have been called moral.

It is not to be forgotten that much good thought, as well as a great deal of bad, has been spent in endeavouring to fit life into moral forms. Is this, a noble and praiseworthy ambition, to be given up, suppose it to be generally accepted that the two things are incompatible?

So far as can be seen, the effect will tend the other way. No one would deny that, within limits and apart from natural calamities, a life that is in the main consonant with moral ideals can be contrived ; and this is a point which will be the more readily comprehended the more it is seen that the conservative, the rigid, the exclusive, the superstitious, are not elements necessary to morality. The human community can be a great deal more plastic than it has hitherto been ; the more plastic it is the more subtle and complex will human relations be, the greater the scope for moral parallels. Consider—not for its own sake but for the sake of illustration—a great man's suggestion that children should be regarded as everybody's children, that is, that a child should have not one home but many. As an idea it has everything to commend it. It substitutes for a special and exclusive relation between parent and child an ideal of behaviour from all grown-ups to all children. There is no one who does not cherish this ideal, no one who does not fancy himself the perfect parent to some child. The difficulty is that the child he has is not necessarily the child he wants. There are differences of temperament for which neither he nor the child is to blame.

Consider, if the idea were to be realized, the great expansion of moral qualities which would be imperative. No parent would resign his child except he were assured it would receive the same consideration from other hands as it had from his own. Complete trust, that is, would have to exist between the members of the community, and that trust could only be created by the sincere and deliberate practice of kindliness and toleration. But by the mutual confidence so founded much besides children could be exchanged. Again, it would be evident that the

exchange could not be free unless the worldly condition of all families were much the same; that is, exaggerations of riches and poverty would have to be removed. It would be found, in short, that the practice of one moral ideal is necessarily bound up with the practice of others.

The increasing fluidity of social relations effected by thought would multiply the opportunities for the exercise of moral virtues. The moral enthusiast would not be compelled to fit his ideals into a world whose forms he was unable to alter, but could alter those forms to fit his ideals. The difference is much greater than might appear. To seek for goodness wherever it may be found has much more of true morality in it than the conviction that nothing is good save what is already known.

Again, the more social institutions accorded with common sense the less need would there be for that most uncomfortable passion, moral indignation. Few of us can avoid it, as things are; but most of us are willing to admit it is a poor use to make of the moral consciousness. Being human, we seek rather to admire than to condemn, and would be glad were the world so ordered that such virtues as we have had their opportunity. The more this was so, the more should we look for our morality to exercise itself in feelings rather than in things. It would be less a yearning than a state of mind, passive rather than active. It would operate in ourselves rather than in the world.

For these reasons the subtlest and most permanent exemplification of the moral consciousness is in the sense of humour. That this is in fact based on the moral consciousness is not always recognized. Because it has affiliations with wit or with the comic it is often confused with them. But the sense of humour is something more;

it has a balance, a stability, an assurance which is wanting to the others. They rest on qualities of mind or body: this rests on something else also.

Like tears, mere laughter is a mark of excitement which custom or something else has associated with a certain temperamental state. Why we should laugh when we are pleased or weep when we are grieved are in part physiological questions upon which a great deal remains to be discovered. They are uncertain reactions; one can cry for joy as well as pain, or laugh for vexation as well as happiness. In general, however, laughter goes with excitement of a pleasurable kind, and particularly with what we regard as comical or witty.

But what do we regard as comical or witty? Sometimes it is no more than our own excitement masquerading as such, no more than high spirits or the intoxication of being in a crowd. We laugh in public at what would weary us in a book.

There is a mental element, however. Bearing in mind that all activity is in the nature of a game or problem to be solved, we can see that we laugh at those problems of which the solution surprises us. We laugh at the contortions of a clown because he solves a problem with which we are familiar in a surprising way, the way we did not expect. We all know what walking is, or falling down is, but we are not accustomed to do them in just that way. When we are, we laugh no longer; when the surprise goes the laughter goes. It is the same thing with more purely mental surprises; we cannot hear a joke twice, and none of us can stand a pun in these days, that form of surprise being too painfully familiar.

It will be seen that it is the same mental element in our laughter, whether we laugh at an ingenious move in

chess, a clever piece of dodging in football, the latest story, or the low comedian's tumble. Moreover, if we are not familiar with the problem we do not laugh: a child's jokes leave us cold, as ours do the child. Lastly, once we know the solution it ceases, or very soon ceases, to amuse.

Two elements, therefore, would be necessary for a permanent and universal jest, namely, that it should be based on a condition familiar to everybody, and a condition which was a permanent source of surprise.

Now it will be apparent at once that these are precisely the conditions attached to the appearance of the moral consciousness in man. All men are moral, and the contrast between what man as moral claims to be and what he is as man is a never-failing surprise. Of its nature it is something to which we can never get accustomed.

It has to be remembered that this contrast is always present to man in some form or degree. It is not necessary for him to be familiar with the arguments developed in these pages. The contrast is there; these arguments attempt merely to account for it. Though they failed, the contrast is still there. He is always aware of the gulf between what he is and what he would be, between the breadth of his conceptions and the smallness of his grasp. Nor is the theme in the first instance a subject for humour. It is this contrast and no other which is the substance of all tragedy.

To take a good man and to submit him to misfortunes which were none of his fault was the Greek idea of tragedy. A good man, because if he were bad the moral sense would not be called into play. Without morality there is nothing tragic. The pity comes from the slight put upon his moral aspirations. But as regards tragedy

there is probably no need to labour the point: all would agree. It remains to point out that the same theme can also be, is indeed more properly, a subject for humour.

It is human nature that the more certain you are of a thing the less are you concerned with the public estimate of it. If you are not sure of yourself, for example, you do not like to be laughed at: if you are sure of yourself you can even join in the laughter. To apply this to morality—the less you are certain of man's moral nature, the more you see it as a timid fumbling after goodness ruthlessly checked by some unfeeling power, the more pitiful it appears. But as your convictions grow your feeling turns rather to defiance or contempt; and if your conviction is perfect your feeling will be even one of amusement.

In other words, a certain humour, a certain balance or imperturbability is a more natural outcome of strong moral feeling than is tragic indignation. To lament his destiny is the part of a weaker man: a strong man is amused. A moral being can take care of himself; he needs no pity. He meets all assaults not with heroics but with laughter.

Such is the frame of mind which is at the bottom of what we know as the sense of humour. To work it out in all its forms would be impossible, as they are so many. In its highest forms it creates not laughter but that state in which we know not whether to laugh or cry, when we grasp in a breath both the nobility of man and his limitations. It is true that humour has associations both with the comic and even the profane. The pantomime jests about mothers-in-law base themselves not less upon this contrast between what man is and what he would be than do the supremest works of great

writers. Little things, that is, please little minds; morality makes a genius of no man. Though it takes its spring in the moral nature, humour, like everything else, must be worked out by brains. Rendered by an artist its tenderness, its unruffledness, its subtle suggestion of idealism in the commonest offices of life show it to be the finest embodiment of morality of which human nature is capable. No one can lay down the law upon art; if a man thinks he must be serious over matters of morality he cannot be prevented. But it is to be doubted whether the first wave of attack, which climbed out of their trenches to certain death shouting 'This way for the early doors', did not better express all the pity and all the glory of that moment than any sermon.

Furthermore, the association of morality with humour has special effects by identifying it with laughter, toleration, forbearance, and the other qualities of good fellowship. The seriousness with which there is a natural impulse to treat morality tends to prejudice its best intentions. Morality or none, life has to be lived; there is too much sorrow in it as it is to permit of exaggeration. After all, lightness of heart is as much—or as little—a moral quality as solemnity. It no more tends to frivolity than the other to pomposity. What is wanted is a state of mind which will enable one to receive the inevitable rebuffs of fortune with fortitude; and for most people a certain gaiety serves better than anything. And, as already stated, the very certitude involved in the moral consciousness justifies our gaiety. If we doubted, we might well be serious; but there is no room for doubt.

If, then, the sense of humour is the contemplation of man as a moral being subjected to conditions that are

not moral, it follows that the moral consciousness is a source on which we can draw for cheerfulness and courage ; qualities which, life being what it is, few would surrender and most would choose first. Since we cannot resist the impulse to reduce morality to earthly forms, we must seek such forms as preserve their moral quality in the greatest variety of circumstance. Since we cannot alter life, we must consider the attitude in which we meet it. And if the intellectual implications of morality can help us so to compose our natural virtues that we meet our destiny with the least damage to our moral serenity, so much the better. The moments of doubt and irresolution are many enough ; we must put something between them and our nakedness. At such moments a laugh is better than all the inquisitions of reason, a fine habit than a fine intelligence. We are all companions in misfortune, but we can drag our fetters with an air.

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